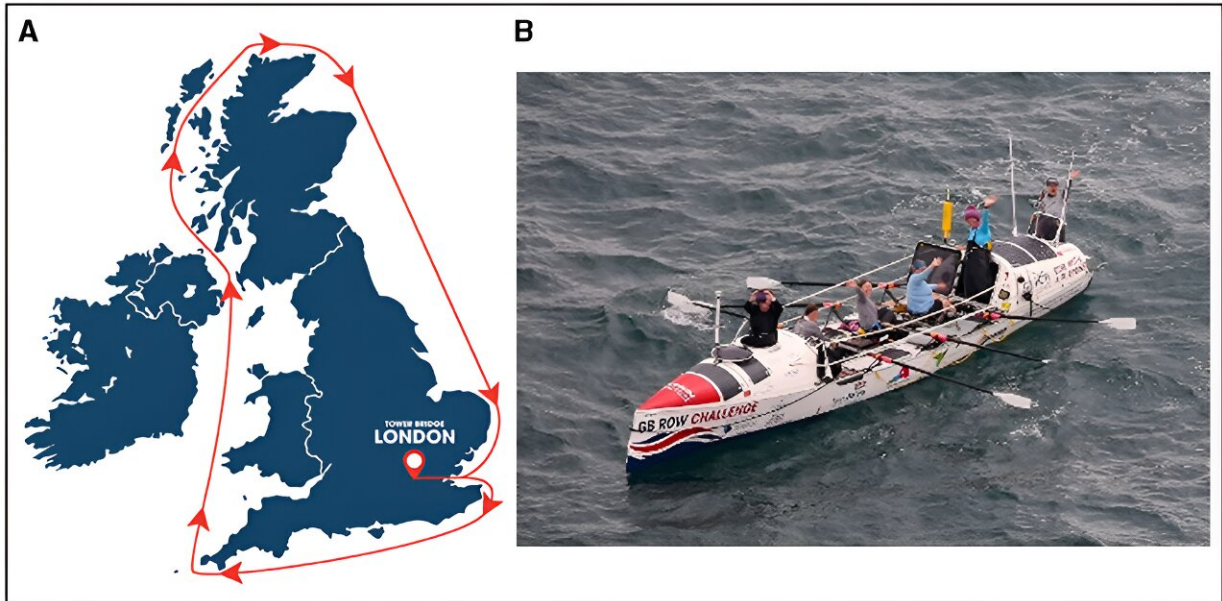


How citizen science is saving our seas

January 16 2024



Marine recreation with a purpose example: GB Row Challenge's Row with a Purpose project (A) General route taken by crews on GB Row Challenge races, showing spatial coverage of the microplastics, environmental DNA, underwater acoustics, water temperature and salinity data collected. (B) A GB Row Challenge vessel with 2023 crew on board (scale: vessel is 10 m in length). Written permissions for the publication of identifiable images have been obtained. Credit: *Frontiers in Sustainable Tourism* (2023). DOI: 10.3389/frsut.2023.1304040

Ocean adventurers teaming up with scientists can improve the health of our seas, claims new research from the University of Portsmouth.

"Marine recreation with a purpose" sees marine sports enthusiasts working with scientists and engineers to contribute to global efforts like the UN's Ocean Decade goals.

The trend is epitomized by the GB Row Challenge, an annual rowing race around Great Britain's coastline, which combines the power of rowing with the purpose of driving scientific advancements to protect our planet's marine ecosystems.

Teams embark on a 2,000 mile journey around Great Britain collecting data on microplastics, [noise pollution](#), biodiversity, temperature and salinity.

Lead author of the paper, Laura Fantuzzi from the University of Portsmouth, is a Ph.D. student analyzing the [scientific data](#) collected from last year's race and is taking part in the challenge this year. The paper "Marine recreation with a purpose: an emerging form of marine citizen science in the Ocean Decade" is published in [Frontiers in Sustainable Tourism](#).

She said, "It's so exciting to bring science to a wider audience through sport. The sports industry has such a massive reach and it can really play a pivotal role in raising awareness of climate-related challenges.

"Integrating marine citizen science with recreation, adventure or sports, also contributes to the United Nations' Ocean Decade goals, such as encouraging ocean stewardship and highlighting [ocean](#) conservation to audiences who aren't usually engaged."

This [trend](#) isn't just about mass data collection from random volunteers, it's all about integrating vital science into specific marine events, from rowing and sailing races to individual expeditions.

GB Row Challenge Founder, William de Laszlo, is a co-author on the paper. He said, "We're keen to ignite a passion for our oceans among diverse audiences. GB Row Challenge is all about turning an adrenaline-packed expedition into a valuable data-gathering mission, which will ultimately protect our oceans.

"The importance of our seas cannot be underestimated and we'd love to amplify our efforts. Imagine how much a global network of marine enthusiasts, scientists and engineers could achieve to help sustain our oceans."

Professor of Biology, Alex Ford, from the University of Portsmouth's Institute of Marine Sciences, said, "It has been very exciting to be working with the team at GB Row who had the passion, enthusiasm and vision to turn their epic rowing adventures into long-term marine science projects. We are already starting to generate impactful datasets which will help us understand better coastal pollution, climate change and biodiversity around the UK.

"This project at the University of Portsmouth now forms one of several we have been fortunate to now work on involving oceanographic races. These provide unique opportunities to sample in global locations and in ways not undertaken before and help us better understand our planet and the impacts we humans have on our environment."

More information: Laura Fantuzzi et al, Marine recreation with a purpose: an emerging form of marine citizen science in the Ocean Decade, *Frontiers in Sustainable Tourism* (2023). [DOI: 10.3389/frsut.2023.1304040](https://doi.org/10.3389/frsut.2023.1304040)

Provided by University of Portsmouth

Citation: How citizen science is saving our seas (2024, January 16) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-01-citizen-science-seas.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.