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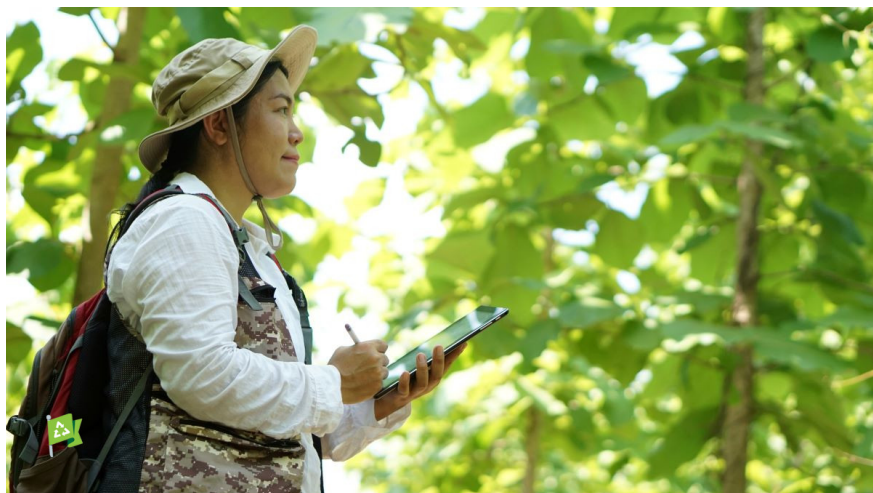
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## Earth Action: Experiment With Citizen Science



By [Gemma Alexander](#)

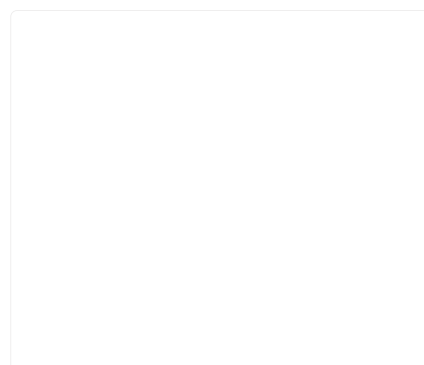
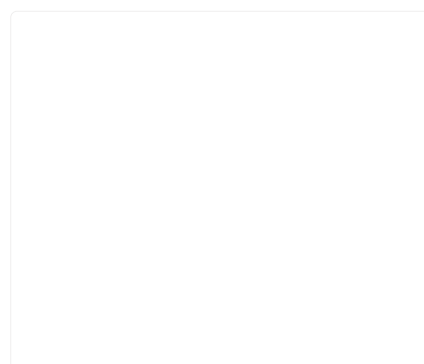
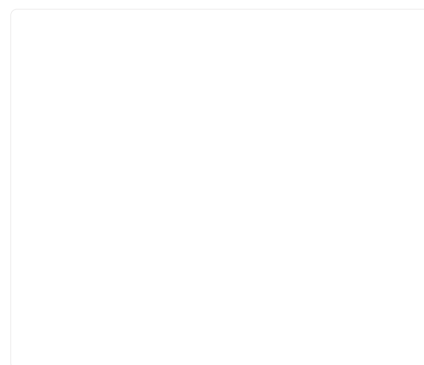
JUL 15, 2022 [citizen science](#), [earth action](#), [research](#)



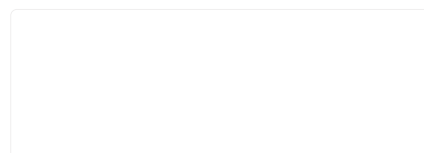
To honor 52 years of action inspired by Earth Day, Earth911 presents 52 Actions for the Earth. Each week from Earth Day 2022 to Earth Day 2023, we will share an action you can take to **invest in the Earth** and make your own life more sustainable.

Although you wouldn't always know it from American headlines, the **science on climate change** is certain. But there is still a lot we don't know about this world of ours – especially when it comes to the ways that our actions are affecting ecological systems. Funding is limited, and thanks in part to a lack of **climate education**, few of us grow up to become scientists

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conducting environmental research. And while you probably can't fund any major ecology studies, you can help scientists with projects that rely on massive amounts of data.

## Action: Experiment With Citizen Science

### Citizen Science

You don't have to be a scientist (or even a citizen) to contribute to citizen science. Citizen science is also called participatory science because it provides a unique opportunity for individuals from all walks of life to participate in the scientific process and to contribute a greater understanding of the environment. It's not just a feel-good exercise either. Citizen scientists have made important contributions. After NOAA **discovered increasing CFC levels** that pointed to new production somewhere in East Asia, *The New York Times* and the nonprofit **Environmental Investigation Agency** (EIA) collaborated to **discover unregistered factories** in China that were using the chemical CFC-11. The global attention spurred **a crack-down** on the illegal factories.

Sometimes individual citizens are the driving force behind a project. Volunteer **park stewards in Seattle** have been driving research on the die-off of native sword ferns for years. More commonly, scientists rely on **citizen scientists** to help them pursue research that requires massive amounts of field data, especially collected over a large geographic area. One of the most famous examples of this is **Audubon's annual bird count**. There are also several citizen science programs that collect data on **monarch butterflies**. Both the **Environmental Protection Agency** and **National Geographic** track citizen science initiatives across a broad range of environmental topics.

### Global Earth Challenge

In fact, there are so many citizen science opportunities, choosing one to participate in can be overwhelming. If you're not sure where to begin, test the waters with the **Global Earth Challenge**. Developed for the socially-distanced 50<sup>th</sup> annual Earth Day, the Global Earth Challenge app (available for **Apple** or **Android**) helps engage millions of people while integrating billions of data points from new and ongoing citizen science projects. Users can contribute to any one or all of the four different projects supported by the app. (Two more categories are still under development.)

This week, download the Global Earth Challenge app and choose one of the four questions:

- What is the extent of plastic pollution?
- How does air quality vary locally?

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- How are insect populations changing?
- Is my food supply sustainable?

Spend a few minutes exploring the app to learn how it works, and read the information provided on your selected question. Then, throughout the week, keep your eyes open for opportunities to contribute your own data to the study.

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Reading time: 2 mins

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By [Gemma Alexander](#)

Gemma Alexander has an M.S. in urban horticulture and a backyard filled with native plants. After working in a genetics laboratory and at a landfill, she now writes about the environment, the arts and family. See more of her writing [here](#).

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