

EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

February 2022



Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Master Naturalists involved with Citizen Science programs

Volunteer efforts can lead University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalists (EMN) on some fun adventures. Sometimes those adventures are as close as their backyard. Citizen Science programs have given EMNs serving in Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell counties opportunities to use their skills and knowledge to impact their communities and beyond.

"I believe the Master Naturalist program has its greatest value in the knowledgeable volunteers who assist professional agencies and organizations that work on environmental issues," stated EMN Marcia Heitz. Local EMNs have been providing their expertise to Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count, BeeSpotter, Bumble Bee Watch, FrogWatch USA, CoCoRaHS, Great Backyard Bird Count, Great Sunflower Project, Illinois RiverWatch, iNaturalist, Monarch Watch, Monitoring of Owls and Nightjars, and Project Squirrel.

Citizen Science programs are often described as public participation in scientific research. It is also known as community science, crowd science, and volunteer monitoring. According to the Wikipedia definition, citizen science improves the scientific community's capacity as well as increase the public's understanding of science.

With the extensive training EMNs receive, along with their own personal education and professional backgrounds, EMNs are the perfect volunteers for Citizen Science programs. It also is a perfect way for EMNs to fit in volunteer hours in their busy schedules.

Kate MacIntrye shared, "Citizen Science is a great way to still help in some way, but on my own time and schedule. My background is in Biology, so it is a way for me to still collect data and see interesting results based on many other Citizen Scientists all over the world!"

Other "perks" that EMNs describe about their Citizen Scientist experiences include the ease of using the technology to submit data, the continuing education as they improve their record keeping skills and more about their area of science, and the impact they are making locally and nationally.

To find a citizen science project which suits your interest, visit the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Citizen Science projects at www2.illinois.gov/dnr/education/Pages/CitizenScience.aspx. If you are looking for a broader reach visit CitizenScience.gov

More Extension Master Naturalists have shared their stories about their Citizen Scientist experiences at go.illinois.edu/EMNstories.



Photo by Anita Wilkinson | Illinois Extension

Extension Master Naturalist Mary Zehner is an avid bird watcher. She is also a Citizen Scientist. Local EMNs participate in several different Citizen Scientist programs including Mary's favorite The Cornell Lab of Ornithology eBird program. She has contributed 1,454 checklists within a 15-mile radius of her home.

Christine Belless

Natural Resource & Ag
Program Coordinator
cbelless@illinois.edu