

Friday, January 26, 2018

1 hour discussion –via GoToMeeting

Meeting began – 11:00 am Mountain/AZ

Discussion Topic: *Engaging volunteers through a phenology book club!*

Present on the call: LoriAnne Barnett (NCO); Dionna Hatch (NCO, Grad Student Assistant); Ken Lavish (volunteer, Patuxent NWR, Maryland); Jean Linsner (coordinator, Chicago 606 Project); Judy Davis (volunteer coordinator, Ding Darling NWR, Florida); Patric Harper (restoration biologist, Gulf Coast Phenology Trail, FWS Grand Bay Coastal Resources Center, MS); Stella Kovacs (volunteer, Santa Barbara Botanical Garden, CA); Suzanne Mrozak (volunteer, volunteer coordinator Arnold Arboretum, Boston)

TAKE AWAYS: *Book club ideas*

- Book clubs are a great way to add to a list of ideas for engaging volunteers in addition to collecting nature’s notebook data
- Offer social engagement opportunities and a change to meet engage with available science or research staff
- Host them every 4-6 weeks, overview of book and author, and take questions. Great to do in seasonal downtime.
- Consider partnering with other groups that may also have book clubs in your area and ask to co-sponsor, e.g. libraries, nature centers, land trusts, etc.

Intros and Celebrate a Success

- Ken (volunteer) – Patuxent refuge – Success – joining Nature’s Notebook! Refuge manager and biologist are on board and he is trying to get them to decide on some species. Currently doing Project BudBurst, he was the coordinator, will keep doing it. They like NN b/c it is a larger program and is interesting in
- Jean Linsner (Chicago 606 Project) – just completed first year of data collection on their trail, rail line converted into a multiuse trail. Over 70,000 observations. Tavern talk on Tuesday and presenting their results. Volunteers will present, creating t-shirt for top 2 volunteers, collecting 10k and 13k. Used the dashboards for pulling together the year-end report.
- Judy Davis (Ding Darling NWR) – volunteer coordinator - success refuge lead biologist, volunteer coordinator, and she have met and selected the species. Have 12 committed volunteers now, starting a with a meeting scheduled for next week. Will People are very excited to get start.
- Patric Harper (Gulf Coast Phenology Trail) – have a new trail coordinator, Gail, and they’ve been adding sites (8 total) along MS, LA, and have done several trainings. Sue is retiring at
- Stella Kovacs (Santa Barbara Botanical Garden) – works with Susan Mazer CPP director – she is the volunteer, volunteer coordinator. Monitoring iconic CA species, 3 of the plants are the same but they vary in their phenology. Phenology day – April 29, Sunday, 11-3 holding a training/workshop at the peak of flowering. Garden was closed b/c of the fire and mudslides but is back open.
- Suzanne Mrozak (Arnold Arboretum) – Tree spotters, volunteer coordinator, looking at 11 native species. Starting 4th season 4 classes in the spring, training more volunteers. MIT cit sci fair the day before, great opportunity to recruit people. Participating in the city Nature Challenge bioblitz, connecting with other nature orgs in the area to cross pollinate. First book club meeting on Feb 5th, 17 people. Continuing to move program from research to outreach/public programs – can use their resources like constant contact. Great way to people engaged in science. Survey was super helpful and timely – helped her to
- Tom Hein (BoD member, Friends of Great Plains Nature Center, KS) – attending an NPN Training at NCTC and is looking forward to thinking about a plan for participation moving forward.

Discussion Topic: Book club ideas?

- Suzanne Feature books in a newsletter, brings in speakers who are authors, set criteria, page numbers, focused on cit sci, trees, non-fiction, sent out request for ideas and she came up with a list for 6 or 7. Has two other people helping, asked people to vote. Picked 3 meetings between now and May as a trial, maybe do it again the fall.
- Movies are also an idea to engage folks
- Good way to engage folks around phenology – connecting new people to observers who have been around. Provides another social activity for folks to do that is not data related
- One Suzanne’s book list – picked books related to the 11 species they are monitoring, including: *The Hidden Life of Trees*, Peter Wohlleben; *Brilliant Green: The Surprising History and Science of Plant Intelligence*, by Stephano Mancuso and Alessandra Viola; *The Hidden Half of Nature*; *The microbial roots of life and health*, by David R. Montgomery; *The Triumph of Seeds: How grains, nuts, kernels, pulses, and pips conquered the plant kingdom and shaped human history*, by Thor Hanson
- *Urban forests: A natural history of trees and people in the American Cityscape*, by Jill Jonnes – this book is longer and has good info about the Arnold Arboretum, thus is place-based for her group. Might only read sections of this one because it is longer
- Because the Arboretum has public programs with docents and tour guides, they are in a position to be connected with the Tree Spotters volunteers now – this will help them feel more comfortable including info about the citizen science program in the tours. Opening up the book club to everyone as a public program helps to cross advertise
- Suggestions: Hold the club every 4-6 weeks for 3 books. Coincide with trainings, can help advertise. Others volunteers helping have book club experience and will run it, not sure if there will be an overview of the book or just a conversation.
- Judy has been in several book clubs and that is generally what they do – Generally a good turnout for locally sponsored book clubs. 225 volunteers, plus open to others. NN is something else for them to do. During their clubs they talk about the author first and then ask for questions. Book club rules: you don’t say your opinion of the book – that kills the conversation. Be specific and focus on positive or special about the book. Not everyone has had time to read but still want to come. They have also done Rachel Carson’s books, other authors, seasonality, authors every Friday on Env topics. Suggested book: *Minnesota phenology: Seasonal Northland*, by Larry Weber, 2013, is not just about MN phenology but includes species of interest elsewhere. Another good one: [Annual Missouri Calendar](#) – 2018 Mo Dept of Conservation Calendar– everyday has something that is documented. (2018 NATURAL EVENTS CALENDAR 2018 NATURAL EVENTS CALENDAR SKU 01-0361)
- Also nice to collaborate with libraries, nature centers, Audubon who already do book clubs and co-sponsor it with them as a start if you don’t have time to pull it together yourself.
- Ken – concerned about keeping volunteers engaged – initial burst of enthusiasm, and then people start falling off. Suzanne – train people, let them loose, on their own. Tell people they will provide help if they want. They now have 2 events a month – let people know they are happening, going around and looking at the trees with someone leading (something budding or fruiting or blooming). Other is a “Focus tree gathering” – go in front of one tree, talk about the whole life cycle, ethnobotany, stories or songs to share, etc. Making sure there are other opportunities for vols to engage with each other outside of collecting data throughout the year. Pot lucks that are tree related (cookies with hickory nuts). Book club is the new venture. Invite one of the scientists to be present for your events. Allow people to self-select what they want to observe or tell them the most important things to observe.
- LA – create a schedule for participation so that one person doesn’t do everything. Focus around natural history of the plants focus the events around prime and non-prime times.

Next time

- **Next Call – February 16th at 10 am Pacific time:** Citizen Science Day (April 14th) ideas!

Thanks everyone!

Meeting Adjourned –12:02 pm Mountain/AZ time