



The Adventure Awaits—Become a Nature Observer!

No matter how advanced our technologies and how big the city we are living, we cannot deny and forget the deep roots we have with nature. Nature is just on the other side of your door, waiting for you to explore. Here is your opportunity to experience nature and learn about phenology through a national project of the USA National Phenology Network called *Nature's Notebook*.

Growing up, I was always that kid with a lot of questions about nature. Why do tree's leaves turn yellow from green and disappear in the winter? Why do birds fly away during the fall season but come back the next spring? However, my enthusiasm for nature and the outdoors was fading. Not only because of aging but also because the answers to my questions could be easily found in textbooks or online.

Nature's Notebook reignites my passion for nature once again. The citizen scientist program that I participated in my freshman year at the University of Arizona, required us to use the *Nature's Notebook* mobile application to observe a plant for the semester. I selected a candy barrelcactus (usanpn.org/nn/Ferocactus_wislizeni), located at the Krutch Garden in the University of Arizona's Campus Arboretum. During this process, the observations re-stimulated my interest in nature. I was so inspired I even started independently searching for additional information about the candy barrelcactus on the Internet.

The magic of *Nature's Notebook* isn't limited to helping college students track plants for school projects; it also helps many nature enthusiasts, researchers, and scientists to study the phenomenon of seasonal change. The following are examples of local volunteer researchers using *Nature's Notebook* in greater Tucson.

Randall Smith is currently working as an outreach volunteer with The Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research at the University of Arizona. He is using *Nature's Notebook* to record plant changes at the University's Krutch Garden for his research. Randall describes the impact of phenological observations - "it enables researchers to better understand past, present, and future changes in the natural world." However, he admitted using *Nature's Notebook* on his phone could be a challenge for him. "I am not adept at using my iPhone (digital immigrant), so I jot down observations and record them at home on my laptop. I am learning botanical concepts & terminology anew to make accurate observations." When being asked about beneficial aspects of his *Nature's Notebook* experience, Randall said, "I have a professional and personal interest in improving scientific literacy for all citizens. Being involved with *Nature's Notebook* (and the National Phenology Network) helps me build a base of knowledge and experience that I can draw on in my interactions with the public."

Hilary Cox is another scholar using *Nature's Notebook* for research. She is a plant specialist and dedicated observer at Oracle State Park, located north of Tucson. It is hard to observe phenological changes of plants

in a short time and repeatedly recording the same observational data was a challenge for Hillary. But after decades of observations, Hillary had seen great changes, and that is what inspired her to persist. Hilary said that she wanted to continue to contribute to the future by collecting data now. When she answered the question about how *Natures' Notebook* had impacted her work, Hilary said, "It has 'enabled' me! Allowing for my observations to be recorded in a data bank; data, until recently, was only in my own notebooks."

Nature is full of surprises and secrets that are waiting for us to discover. Just like Randall, Hilary, or me, no matter who you are and what your job, *Nature's Notebook* can always open the nature's door to you. Please, pull out your phone, open your *Nature's Notebook* App, and get ready to embrace the amazing adventure nature has prepared. It is waiting for you! Educators, gardeners, farmers, scientists, and many others are waiting for your valuable contributions.