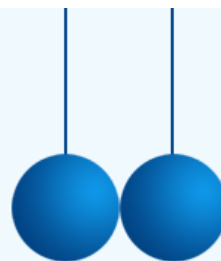


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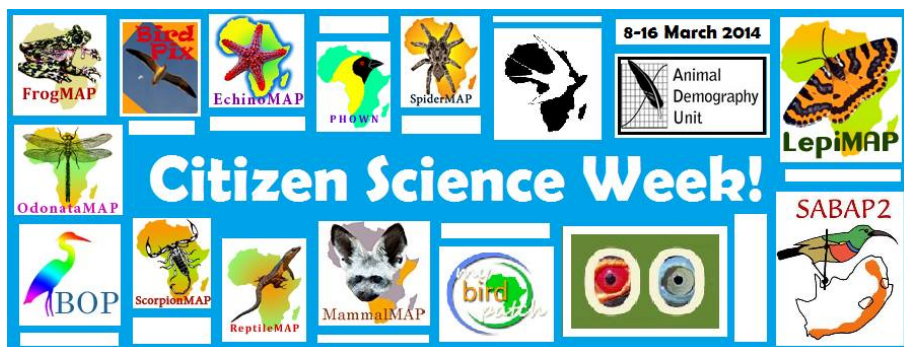
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Citizen Science Week: 8–16 March 2014

Blog post by Sally Hofmeyr
5 March 2014

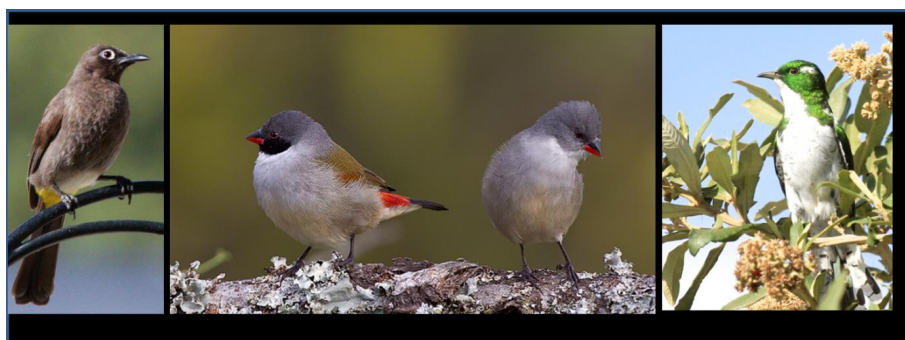
To celebrate Open Education Week (10–15 March), the **Animal Demography Unit (ADU)** is holding a Citizen Science Week (see [this post](#) for details about the ADU and citizen science as well as this [Citizen Science Week FB post](#)). This additional celebration runs during Open Education Week but also includes the weekends at either end (8–16 March). The weekends are included because, for many people, they are the best time of the week to practise citizen science! The ADU is heavily involved in open education, but in a rather different way from how most people probably expect open education to work.



The main way in which the ADU contributes to education is by getting people involved in citizen science projects. These are projects in which anyone who has a camera or can identify birds can participate. By becoming involved in these projects, people discover an enormous amount about the natural world around them. One of the ways in which I have participated is by recording a bird list every time I walk from my flat up to UCT; this has made me much more aware of which birds are in the area, which are rare and special to see and which are more common, and how these things change throughout the year.

Secondly, the ADU makes all of the project data available to the public. Two Slideshare presentations explain how to create and download [distribution maps](#) and [species lists](#) using data from the Virtual Museums. So if, for example, you are interested in where particular species occur, or in which species you might expect to find in a particular area, you can extract data from the project databases to tell you just that. (Bear in mind, though, that some of the projects have not been running for very long yet, so the data might still be a little sparse.)

Finally, the ADU supports open education by communicating widely with the public. In addition to its own website, the unit has a very active [Facebook page](#), as well as a page for each of its projects. It has a [Twitter account](#) and members of the ADU also post regularly on blogs, give talks to bird clubs and conservation groups, and are interviewed on the radio. The ADU also co-hosts a publication called [Ornithological Observations](#), where new and unusual observations about birds can be published. This journal is open access and freely available to all.



From the ADU's director, Prof. Les Underhill: "Citizen Science Week celebrates the participation and involvement of citizen scientists in building our digital biodiversity databases, totalling some 15 million records. The objective of our "Citizen Science Week" is to give all citizen scientists a chance to become a community with the objective of collecting and submitting as much biodiversity data in digital format as we are able during the week."

This week is a great opportunity to expand the citizen science team, and we are also encouraging cross-pollination between the projects. If you are not involved yet, please consider signing up and contributing to one or more of the ADU's projects! If you are involved already, you can help to expand the team by inviting someone new to join you atlas-ing, ringing, counting, or virtual museuming. (Just remember to show them the project protocols – for example, exactly how to go about bird atlas-ing!) Also please consider participating in a project to which you have not yet contributed – you too can begin to learn about a whole new aspect of biodiversity!

Above all, these celebrations honour all of the thousands of citizen scientists who have contributed their countless records to the ADU's projects. The ADU heartily thanks all citizen scientists for their ongoing support!



Pictures: (in the order in which they appear)

Cape Bulbul -- by Lia Steen; Swee Waxbills -- by Gregg and Des Darling; Klaas' Cuckoo -- by Pat Elk; *Pantala flavescens* dragonfly -- by G Diedericks; Arum lily frog -- by J Crocombe; Unidentified spider -- by F Rautenbach

(All pictures are available from the [ADU's Virtual Museum](#) under a [CC-BY-NC-SA license](#))

[Blog post](#)



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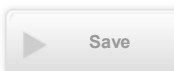
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