

## Putting 'Citizen' in 'Citizen Science': You Can Help Biodiversity!

Blog post by Sarah Goodier  
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If you're interested in plants and animals, have a camera/camera phone and want to contribute to conservation efforts, you're in luck. You (yes, YOU!) can help scientists map the current locations of a wide variety of organisms in and around South Africa. Lots of energy and enthusiasm, but no experience or degree, required.

### Me, you and the ADU

The **Animal Demography Unit (ADU)**, based in the Department of Biological Sciences at the **University of Cape Town (UCT)** works closely with members of the public to add to a growing database of flora and fauna locations. Through their many citizen science projects, anyone can contribute to this growing body of knowledge of where different African plants and animals can be found. Each project focuses on a specific group. For example, **MammalMap** is specifically interested in helping to "update the distribution records of all African mammal species". You can check out the ADU's list of exciting projects on [their site](#) to find out more about their work and how you can get involved today.



### Open up and say 'accessible!'

The data that is submitted to each project is publically available via the [ADU's Virtual Museum site](#). Through this interface you can search and display the records for any of the organisms as well as view the maps of where the sightings occurred – so, you can easily see what creatures are out there and where they are being found. All this data is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike license](#), meaning that you can tap into this exciting resource and reuse the data, under the conditions stated in the license, in the classroom and beyond.

Here are some useful links to get you started:

- Snap it and map it poster: <http://www.slideshare.net/meganloftieaton/snap-it-and-map-it>
- How to submit records to the ADU's virtual museum: <http://www.slideshare.net/meganloftieaton/how-to-submit-records-to-the-animal-demography-units-virtual-museums-28710898>
- How to photograph butterflies and moths: <http://www.slideshare.net/meganloftieaton/how-to-photograph-butterflies-and-moths>

The ADU is a great example of a whole research unit opening up its data collection process - a step towards open science here in South Africa. So, the next time you venture into the great outdoors, put your Instagram and your digital camera to good use. Help South Africa's biodiversity and the ADU out – snap a picture of the wildlife you come across and become a citizen scientist!

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