



"OpenNature" for climate impact science with citizens: Raising awareness, collecting data and understanding climate and environmental change

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With a changing climate, seasons shift, too. The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF) AGORA science communication project "Open the Book of Nature" aims at collecting evidence seen in daily life, that can also be used to quantify climate change impacts. Data are collected using a "Citizen science" approach to climate change impact research. Interested laypersons engage in documenting shifts in seasonal timing of their environment. Citizen scientists collect geo-referenced and precisely dated field observations and photographs in one or more of the four topics plants, animals, landscapes, and climate extremes. These topics are considered chapters of the Book of Nature that shall be opened and filled with content by these laypersons. Scientists in return will provide observation guidelines (protocols), information from the science community and interpretation to the public.

The main goal of the project is the launch of the "OpenNature" website. In addition, "Open the Book of Nature" plans to deliver a collaboration concept to assure information exchange and technical compatibility, a website and strong links with social media sites for presenting information and fostering discussions. In this project a well-established network of climate change researchers is supported by communication experts in print and web-content journalism, as well as by internet graphics and technical designers. "Open the Book of Nature" builds on existing observations programs (e.g. phaeno.ethz.ch, ornitho.ch, webflora.ch, webfauna.ch) and partnerships in Switzerland under the auspices of the Swiss Academy of Natural Sciences SCNAT. The project is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation via its AGORA program from 2012–2015. A possible continuation is envisaged in partnership with SCNAT, the educational GLOBE Swiss program, the Global Climate Observation System (GCOS), the phenological observation program by the Swiss Meteorological Office MeteoSwiss and environmental observation programs by Federal Office for the Environment FOEN.