

Abstract:

We provide program managers insight into considerations for launching and running a large-scale, long-term citizen science project, using the Snapshot Wisconsin trail-camera project as a case study. Many citizen science projects are undertaken with a “learn as you go” approach, so there is room to better prepare program managers from the outset. We provide a comprehensive list of components making up citizen science projects, and discuss capacity needs for each component. We then quantify staff time needed throughout the project, based on our own experiences managing a long-term citizen science project with >1,000 participants. We show that total staff time and staff time devoted to certain project components vary markedly among 3 project phases: planning, growth, and maintenance. We recommend planning for 5.5 staff positions to maintain a long-term project serving a few hundred volunteers or more. The illustrated concepts can be applied by any person or group developing a volunteer-based project to prepare for logistic and funding needs across a project's lifespan. Program managers must remember that people form the backbone of any citizen science project, and the success or failure of such projects depend in large part on the user experience of volunteers.

URL: <https://wildlife.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/wsb.943>