

Qualia

SciStarter helps citizen scientists discover new projects

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Are you a citizen interested in doing science? Or a scientist looking to get volunteers to help you with a project? Then [SciStarter](#) is for you. SciStarter is an incredible database of citizen science projects. It is so diverse that I can pretty much guarantee that there's a program you'll find interesting (and doable). Some projects take only a few seconds while others are a larger investment. Some are location specific while others can be done from the comfort of your couch. I will highlight just three of the many, many projects found on the site to give you a taste of the different types of projects looking for volunteers:

1. [New England Basking Shark Project](#) I found this project on SciStarter by searching for "New England" (I live in Rhode Island). The slogan of this project is "Spot a Fin, Email it In!" and the project is about as simple as that. Say you're out boating and you spot a basking shark. This website allows you to email pictures of the shark to scientists and to give them information about the shark's behavior. Scientists at the New England Coastal Wildlife Alliance can then use the pictures to try to identify individual sharks and track their location. There are many similar wildlife tracking projects on SciStarter—and most don't require a boat. I like these projects because they can make a great excuse to go outside and explore someplace new (and help science at the same time).
2. [The Baby Laughter Project](#) I like this project because I can involve my toddler. Psychologists at the Birkbeck Baby lab want to learn more about how babies think about the world—including what makes them laugh. Citizens scientists with kids under two can help out with the project by filling out a survey. Everyone else can send in "field reports" about a time when they made a baby laugh or can even send in a YouTube video.
3. [Snowtweets](#) Rhode Island just got its first snow, which made me check out this SciStarter project. With snowtweets, people from around the world report the depth of snow in their area on twitter. This information can be used to calibrate NASA's satellite measurements. Snowtweets also has a neat data visualization tool where you can see the amount of snow in different areas.

None of these projects up your alley? No worries, SciStarter has tons more in diverse fields ranging from astronomy to computer science to ecology to food to transportation. And the website makes it really easy for scientists to find volunteers for new citizen science projects.

SciStarter was started by Darlene Cavalier, who also founded [ScienceCheerleader](#), a popular blog that highlights cheerleaders and former cheerleaders working or studying in science fields. To learn more about SciStarter, read the [blog](#) or sign up for their weekly newsletter.