Citizen Science in Glacier National Park

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Citizen science is a term that describes scientific programs and projects in which volunteers—some with no prior scientific training—perform research-related tasks. Citizen science allows citizens to contribute to accomplishing research objectives that might otherwise be financially unfeasible while promoting public involvement with research and science. Citizen scientists are trained by park biologists in data collection and wildlife observation techniques. They provide a wealth of data which is used to obtain much-needed baseline information and increase our understanding of our natural resources. The Crown of the Continent Research Learning Center facilitates several Citizen Science Projects:

Common Loon Monitoring—Involving extensive surveys of Glacier National Park's lakes to document the presence, breeding, and nesting behaviors of Common Loons

High Country—Involving extensive backcountry surveys to collect data on the number and distribution of three species of concern in Glacier National Park: mountain goats, pikas, and Clark's Nutcrackers.

Invasive Weeds—Involving mapping surveys of Glacier national park's 700+ miles of hiking trails to determine the distribution and extent of noxious weeds invading the park.

Citizen Science Coordinator Jami Belt moved to Montana in 1999 and began studying the diverse natural resources of the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem. She was accepted to the University of Montana's Wildlife Biology program as a Boone and Crockett Fellow in 2008 and began her graduate research in June of that year. Her master's thesis—*Evaluating population estimates of mountain goats based on citizen science*—assessed whether citizen science is a useful method to monitor mountain goat (*Oreamnos americanus*) populations and found that when large spatial and temporal coverage can be achieved, citizen science can provide mountain goat population estimates that are statistically similar to those of biologists. http://www.nps.gov/glac/naturescience/ccrlc-citizen-science.htm

Source: Jami Belt, 2008

Jami (with clipboard) in High Country Citizen Science Training