

https://www.jhnewsandguide.com/scene/film/earth-fest-to-celebrate-citizen-science/article_60d3c9bc-d3a0-5755-a38a-3cb74876491c.html

Earth Fest to celebrate citizen science

By Billy Arnold

Apr 17, 2019



Ann Johnson Prum's Emmy Award-winning documentary, "Super Hummingbirds" is one of the environmental films that will be shown Saturday at the Spring Earth Fest.

ANN JOHNSON PRUM / THIRTEEN PRODUCTIONS LLC/

A few branches of science — chemistry, biology, astronomy — are household names. Others are foreign even to veteran science communicators like Ann Johnson Prum.

Prum has spent the past few months senior producing PBS' latest nature series, "American Spring Live." That process has taught her and her team something new.

"We've all learned the word 'phenology,' which is the science of timing" she said.

Learning about the science of timing might not seem as glamorous as capturing slow-motion shots of hummingbirds mating, fighting and raising families, as Prum did in her 2016 Emmy award-winning documentary, “Super Hummingbirds.” It is, however, critical for understanding and talking about spring. The change of seasons is all about annual rhythms. Studying disruptions in those rhythms can be a perfect way to measure how the climate is changing.

As a part of Saturday’s Spring Earth Fest a film and environmental festival sponsored by Jackson Wild and Wyoming PBS, Prum will join a panel of Wyoming scientists to talk about how nonscientists can become involved in measuring the migrations and blooms that signal the arrival of spring in the Mountain West. Spring Earth Fest is one of 10 local events hosted under the umbrella of “American Spring Live,” a national PBS program that will be broadcast at 7 p.m. April 29 and 30 and May 1.

The events are focused on promoting citizen science efforts and drawing attention to the realities of climate change in Wyoming and across the country.

Prum said she hopes both will “inspire viewers to becomes doers.”

“We want to move them from the screen to the outdoors, because at this point it’s all hands on deck,” she said.

That climate focus will be on display throughout Saturday’s event, starting with a 1:30 p.m. screening of “Glaciers of the Winds,” a Wyoming PBS film about Wyoming’s shrinking glaciers. Prum’s film will be shown at 3:30 p.m. before the festival ends with the panel discussion and a showing of “Climb-It Change,” a 15-minute documentary about how the changing climate has affected flora in mountain environments.

Trevor Bloom, a local phenology scientist at The Nature Conservancy who will take part in the panel discussion, produced “Climb-It Change” and is spending this week touring it across North America. Saturday’s screening will be its Jackson debut.

“It takes climate change, and turns it into a story,” he said. “It uses film as a medium to discuss issues that are usually complicated and intimidating.”

For Bloom citizen science is another opportunity to demystify and localize the changing climate. He spearheads Wildflower Watch, a citizen science initiative focused on documenting when plants flower and fruit. By comparing current observations — almost all of which were collected by citizens

looking to lend a hand — to a historical data set, the program has revealed that 65% of spring flowers in the local ecosystem are blooming, on average, 21 days earlier than they did in the 1970s.

Bloom hopes that sort of hands-on experience with science will teach people how data is collected and reduce the controversy about climate change.

“Citizen science gives people an opportunity to see how data is collected and have greater belief in it,” he said.

Dorothy Tuthill, associate director of the University of Wyoming Biodiversity Institute, which will be part of the panel, agreed. She said projects like “Monarchs and Milkweed,” a Biodiversity Institute initiative focused on gathering data about Wyoming’s monarch butterfly population, give normal people an opportunity to understand science, which breaks down the usual partisan divide on environmental issues.

It also gives people the chance to become involved in something bigger than themselves.

“What is known about monarchs is due to citizen science,” Tuthill said.

“I hope that people understand that their contributions are valuable to us and to society as well.”

This version of the article has been modified to add the name of the nonprofit where Trevor Bloom works. — Ed.

Contact Billy Arnold at 732-7062 or entertainment@jhnewsandguide.com.

Event details

Spring Earth Fest

1:30 p.m. start and ‘Glaciers of the Winds’ screening; 2:30 p.m. live raptors from Teton Raptor Center; 3:30 p.m. ‘Super Hummingbirds’ screening; 5:00 p.m. ‘Climb-It Change’ screening; 5:15 p.m. ‘Citizen Science and Climate Change’ panel

Center for the Arts, 265 S. Cache Street

Free

JHWild.org

Billy Arnold

Scene Editor Billy Arnold covers arts and entertainment. He apprenticed as a sound engineer at the Beachland Ballroom in Cleveland, Ohio before making his way to Jackson, where he has become a low-key fan of country music.