Astrobiology News April 2020:
Caring for the Earth and All its Inhabitants while #AloneTogether

Seven years ago, during April 2013, I started writing monthly Clergy Letter Project columns on astrobiology, the multidisciplinary field that evolved from what was called "exobiology" when NASA began efforts to detect extraterrestrial life in the 1950s. NASA's exobiology program laid the groundwork for the broader approach of astrobiology, which includes a focus on how our planet fits into the study of the origin, evolution, and future of life in the Universe.[1] With Earth Day approaching on April 22nd, and with the multitude of crises our planet presently faces, it seems appropriate to focus this month's attention on the only currently-known abode of life in the Universe. To quote from the CLP's Climate Crisis Letter, **"**Scientific understandings and religious teachings alike teach us that we are connected as one human family and, further, we are connected to all life. Thus, our own survival is inextricably connected to the responsible stewardship of the Earth and all its creatures."

Although the Adler Planetarium remains closed this month, we've been developing many remote programs, as well as allocating resources for assisting COVID-19 first responders and researchers who are constructing models to help develop a vaccine.[2] Like all of you, we've been exploring different ways we can make a meaningful difference during this unprecedented mode of operation! How can we all help planet Earth while #AloneTogether? On Friday, April 24th, the Adler's Vice President for Citizen Science, Laura Trouille, will speak with Ira Flatow on the NPR program Science Friday[3] about how Zooniverse[4] has been helping people feel connected and part of something bigger during these challenging times.

During a single week of isolation, 25,000 new people registered with Zooniverse and 216,000 participants made 5.2 million classifications across 100 active projects! Participation hours amounted to 48 full-time employees working for a year or 1 person working for 48 years! Comments from researchers leading projects and participants alike have been equally gratifying: A researcher from the Rainfall Rescue project exclaimed, "Never imagined we would complete a whole decade in 1 day!", while one Texas participant emailed, "Doing what y'all are doing gives all of us a healthy distraction from the rough situation we find ourselves in at the moment. God bless all of you, keep calm, and keep on keeping on." Meanwhile a Gravity Spy participant posted in the discussion forum, "My thoughts and prayers will be with you and all the team and your families too, wishing you all good health, and good progress with everything. And thank you all again, on behalf of the whole community, for keeping these marvelous science machines running and honing them to their quantum limits, and for the opportunity to contribute to this exciting effort!"

Want to join the fun and experience a unique kind of fellowship? During her Science Friday interview on April 24th, Laura will supply details of a classification challenge that will take place the following week during a special Science Friday Facebook and

Zoom Live interactive event. I encourage everyone to tune in, and I encourage you to use this special Zooniverse Projects link[5] whenever you participate in any Zooniverse project – this link is provided just for CLP members, family and friends, so we can track how we're reaching new audiences.

Stay healthy #AloneTogether!
Until next month,

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[1] https://www.nasa.gov/50th/50th_magazine/astrobiology.html
[2] https://wbbm780.radio.com/articles/adler-cranks-out-face-shields-for-first-responders
[3] https://www.sciencefriday.com/
[4] https://www.zooniverse.org/
[5] zooniverse.org/projects?utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=projects-CLP