

What's the Buzz?

Schoolchildren as bee researchers. Their task: to observe the nest and surrounding area. How many bees fly in and out? Do they bring pollen into the nest? Which plants grow nearby? As "citizen scientists" they will supply data for B-R(H)APSODIE, a German-Dutch research project in which the University of Oldenburg is participating under the aegis of its Botanical Garden. "Our goal is to boost cross-border cooperation on bee initiatives and raise public awareness of the precarious situation of these insects," explains Prof. Dr. Dirk Albach, director of the Botanical Garden.

The concept of citizen scientists has been around for some time: until well into the nineteenth century research was often done by amateurs – including famous ones such as Charles Darwin and Gregor Mendel. What these amateur researchers all have in common is their enthusiasm and interest in nature. Today the participation of interested citizens plays a key role above all for biodiversity research, stresses Albach, who is an expert in this area. "Studying the distribution of different species requires the kind of large-scale observation that individual scientists cannot provide." Thanks to digital technologies people all over the world can now document their field observations and make them accessible – thus creating a gigantic stock of data.

1.450

bumblebees
... were distributed by
researchers from the
University of Oldenburg
and a Dutch university
among 29 schools
located in the
Dutch-German
border region

