This session investigates the role of science amateurs for the public understanding and public engagement with science. Insight can be drawn from research on amateur and citizen scientists from the United States, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom regarding the impact of hobbyists on public. Specifically, the session will discuss how serious leisure enthusiasts like amateur astronomers or avid birders play a role in sharing their passion for science with the public. Research on how citizen scientists and their supporting organizations operate indicates that these groups play an essential role in shaping the public understanding of and engagement with science; moreover, the research suggests a model for acquiring science knowledge that focuses on specific islands of expertise first, rather than first attempting to support general knowledge of science that is easily transferable across many citizen science projects span across political borders, particularly those organized via online tools, citizen science is also becoming a mechanism for public engagement with science and is serving as a bridge for cross-cultural understanding.

Organizer: Eric Jones, University of North Carolina
Co-Organizer: Martin Storsdiek, U.S. National Research Council
Moderator: Eric Jones, University of North Carolina
Discussant: Chuck Remington, National Audubon Society
Speakers:

Robert A. Stebbins, University of Calgary
The Role of (Serious) Leisure in Advancing Science: Conceptual Framework

Chris Lintott, Adler Planetarium
Bridging Borders Through Online Initiatives in Citizen Science

Martin Storsdiek, U.S. National Research Council
The Role of Amateur Astronomers in the Public Engagement with Astronomy

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