Dear Editors,

We are submitting our manuscript, *Keeping it simple: An experiment in online classification design*, for publication in *Citizen Science: Theory and Practice.*

Our article explores the effects of interface design on project success and volunteer engagement for citizen science projects that engage volunteers in data interpretation. Specifically, we tested the effect of a simplified “cascade filtering” project design for the Zooniverse project *Snapshots at Sea*, simplifying a complex workflow into a series of binary (“yes” or “no”) questions that we term “cascade filtering.” We found that the cascade filtering project completed the dataset in half the time of the traditional with no reductions in data accuracy or deeper volunteer engagement. The simplified project design and standardized data outputs further provide new opportunities for researchers to leverage mobile technology and machine learning approaches to further expand engagement and increase efficiency.

As researchers increasingly engage volunteers in large-scale data interpretation through online citizen science platforms like [www.zooniverse.org](http://www.Zooniverse.org), projects need to become more efficient and engaging to keep pace with demand for data interpretation. While more work needs to be done to assess potential long-term impacts to the volunteer community, this study demonstrates that cascade filtering provides a rapid, efficient, and accurate alternative to traditional project design. We look forward to sharing our work with citizen science researchers and practitioners.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Warm regards,

Alexandra Swanson