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In response to COVID-19 and the dramatic change to human movement, eOceans launched its mobile app to collect at-sea observations months earlier than expected.

Early on the global shutdown, anecdotal stories and the media reported that nature was rebounding from human confinement associated with preventing the spread of the COVID19 disease. Early science studies immediately documented some positive changes, like cleaner air, but nothing was documented about the ocean. This lack of documentation is largely because ocean studies require scientists, and many of which were sent home and marine science is still most manual -- recording one observation at a time and taking years to collect the data needed to understand patterns, and very few study human uses of the ocean.

eOceans founder, Dr. Christine Ward-Paige, heard from her science and ocean exploring colleagues that this positive 'spin' of recovery was only one side of the story. She heard of communities resuming dynamite fishing, pirates fishing inside protected areas, and rampant poaching of endangered species.

"We weren't going to release the eOceans data collection app for another few months, but given the urgency of the situation we're releasing it now with the hope that we can collect some initial baseline data, and continue to collect it into the future", Ward-Paige said.

eOceans said they have put the mobile app in the app stores, saying "It's not pretty, but it's almost functional".

They are asking if you are one of the fortunate people who are self-isolating along a coast or at-sea – on a beach, diving, fishing, sailing, boating, shipping, etc. – to please download the app and start tracking what you see.

With these data scientists can better understand many questions, such as: Who is still using the ocean right now? For what activities? Where are these activities concentrated? How does this relate to wildlife?

If you are stuck at home you can still download and play with it, and provide feedback.

It's an 'All-Hands-On-Deck' project.