ALT's Biodiversity Survey: iNaturalist Instructions and FAQs

Thank you for your interest in participating in ALT's Biodiversity Survey! We're excited to have you. To contribute, download the free iNaturalist app on your Android or Apple Smartphone, create an account, and start making species observations. When making observations, please stay on the designated trail.

Downloading the iNaturalist App

On your iPhone
1. Open the App Store app, which can be found on your home screen
2. Search for "iNaturalist" in the App Store search bar
3. Once you've found the iNaturalist app, tap "GET" to download. You may need to confirm installation by entering your passcode or using Touch ID.
4. When the app is finished installing, the "GET" button will change to an "OPEN" button. Tapping the "OPEN" button will open the iNaturalist app.
5. You can also open the iNaturalist tap by navigating to your home screen and tapping the iNaturalist app icon. You may have to scroll to your second or third home screen to find the app.

On your Android
1. Open the Play Store app, which can be found in the Apps section of your home screen
2. Search for "iNaturalist" in the Play Store search bar
3. When you've found the iNaturalist app, tap to select the app. This will take you to the iNaturalist app page in the Play Store.
4. On the app page, tap "INSTALL" to download
5. When the app is finished installing, the "INSTALL" button will change to an "OPEN" button. Tapping the "OPEN" button will open the iNaturalist app.
6. You can also open the iNaturalist tap by navigating to the Apps section of your home screen and tapping the iNaturalist app icon.

Creating an iNaturalist Account

To begin making observations in iNaturalist, you must first make an account. This allows all observations to be tied to an "observer," which is you!

On your iPhone
1. Open the iNaturalist app
2. Scroll through the intro sides to get to the Log In page
3. Click "Sign up now!" to create an account
4. Create a username and password, and enter them along with your email
5. Click "Sign Up" to create your account

On your Android
1. Open the iNaturalist app
2. Scroll through the intro sides to get to the "Let's get started!" page
3. Click "Skip for Now" to go straight to the sign up page
4. Click "Sign up now!" on the bottom of the screen
5. Create a username and password, and enter them along with your email
6. Check the three consent boxes and then click "Sign Up" to create your account

Making Species Observations

Once you've downloaded the iNaturalist app and made an account, you're ready to make your first observation! Information about observations and detailed instructions for making an observation are included with permission from iNaturalist. These graphics, along with more information about iNaturalist, can be found on iNaturalist's [Getting Started](#) page.

What Are Observations?

An observation records an encounter with an individual organism at a particular time and location. This includes encounters with signs of organisms like tracks, nests, or things that just died. When you make an observation, you'll record:

Who you are
You'll need to make an **iNaturalist account** and please only post your own personal observations

Where you saw it
Record both the coordinates of the encounter as well as their accuracy. You can obscure the location from the public

What you saw
Choose a group of organisms like **butterflies** or better yet a specific organism like the **Monarch butterfly**. If you provide evidence you can leave this blank and the **community can help**

When you saw it
Record the date of your encounter, not the date you post it to iNaturalist

Evidence of what you saw
By including evidence like a **photo or sound**, the community can help add, improve, or confirm the identification of the organism you encountered. Help the community by taking clear well framed photos, by including multiple photos from different angles
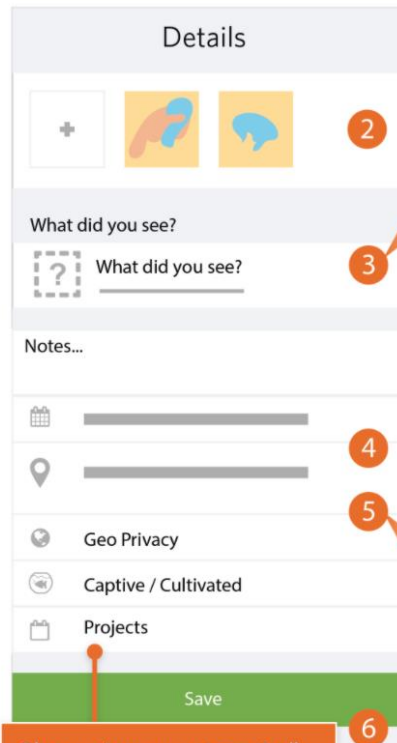
Your observations don't need to include all of these parts, but they do in order to become research quality observations for science. Remember, you should make separate observations for each separate organism you encounter. If you observed something that is not wild, like a garden plant or a lion in the zoo, make sure to mark it as captive/cultivated to prevent it from becoming research quality.

How to Make an Observation with your iPhone

1 Tap **observe**.

Explore → Observe Me More

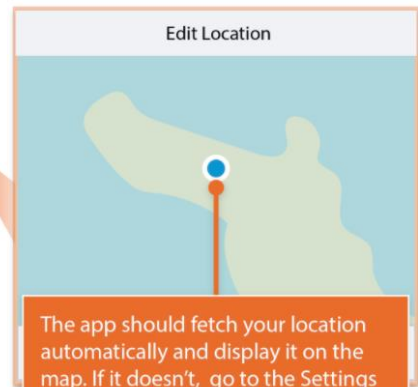**2** Add one or more photos as **evidence**.

3 Choose **what** you saw.

4 **When** you saw it should be added automatically.

5 **Where** you saw it should be added automatically. If it doesn't, check Privacy in the Settings app.

6 **Save** your observation.

Details

2

What did you see?

[?] What did you see? **3**

Notes...

📅 _____ **4**

📍 _____ **5**

🌐 Geo Privacy

🔘 Captive / Cultivated

📅 Projects

Save **6**

Observations are automatically counted by collection proects and can't be added manually

Choose one of the computer vision suggestions, search for something else, or type in a 'Placeholder' if offline

🔍 Frog|

iNaturalist

🐦 ____ ⓘ

🐸 ____ ← ⓘ

Edit Location

5

The app should fetch your location automatically and display it on the map. If it doesn't, go to the Settings app and tap Privacy to enable Location Services for iNaturalist

7 **Upload** to share with the community. This should happen automatically. If it doesn't, tap the Upload button. You can turn off automatic upload from the app settings from the Me tab.

→ ☁ Upload

8 Check back for **activity** on your observation from the community or be notified by email to the address in your account settings.

🐾 ____ → 🚩 1

How to Make an Observation with your Android

1 Tap the **observe** button from the My Observations tab.

2 Add one or more photos as **evidence**.

3 Choose **what** you saw.

4 **When** you saw it should be added automatically.

5 **Where** you saw it should be added automatically. If this doesn't happen, check app permissions in the Settings app.

6 **Save** your observation.

Choose one of the computer vision suggestions, search for something else, or type in 'Placeholder' if offline

Q Frog|

Details   **6** ✓

+

2

[?] What did you see?   **3**

Notes

   4

   5

Geo Privacy

Captive or Cultivated

Projects

Observations are automatically counted by collection projects and can't be added manually

Choose Location

The app should fetch and display your location automatically. If it doesn't, tap through to get your location manually.

7 **Sync** to share with the community. This should happen automatically. If it doesn't, tap the button. You can turn off auto upload from the Settings tab.

Sync 1 observation

8 Check back for **activity** on your observation from the community or be notified by email to the address in your account settings.

1

FAQs

What is iNaturalist?

iNaturalist is an online platform for sharing observations of the natural world. Through iNaturalist, individuals all over the world can record their observations of the plants, animals, and fungi around them. When they're pooled together, these observations constitute research quality data, which scientists can use to better understand and protect nature. This functionality makes iNaturalist a popular platform for hosting citizen science projects, such as ours! Using iNaturalist is also a great way to improve your species identification skills and learn more about the animals and plants in your own backyard. iNaturalist can be accessed on your computer at www.inaturalist.org or through the iNaturalist app on Apple and Android smartphones.

Who is behind iNaturalist?

iNaturalist is a joint initiative of the California Academy of Sciences and the National Geographic Society.

Does using iNaturalist cost money?

Using iNaturalist, and participating in ALT's Biodiverity Survey, is completely free!

What is an observation?

An observation records an encounter with an individual living organism at a particular time and location. In other words, it's a record of what you saw, and where and when you saw it. The primary purpose of iNaturalist is to host and compile individual observations, so that they can be used by scientists, land managers, and nature lovers alike! More information about how to make an observation can be found [here].

Where can I use iNaturalist?

You can use iNaturalist anywhere in the world! However, for an observation to be included in ALT's Biodiversity Survey, it must have occurred on one of ALT's four public properties – Spruce Acres Farm, Little Creek Preserve, Oakland Forest and Meadow Preserve, or along the Sakonnet Greenway Trail. When making observations, please stay on the designated trail.

What is ALT using this information for?

The primary goal of this project is to gain a better understanding of the biodiversity of ALT's conserved public properties. Basically, we want to know about all the cool stuff that lives on our preserves and trails! This information will help us to track biodiversity over time and make better and more informed land management decisions. We're also looking forward to hosting outreach and education events around species identification and local biodiversity, when it's safe to do so.

Do I have to do anything to make my observation count for ALT's Biodiversity Survey?

Nope! All species observations that occur at Spruce Acres Farm, Little Creek Preserve, Oakland Forest and Meadow Preserve, or along the Sakonnet Greenway Trail will be automatically included in the project. Just make sure to include your location in your observation, which should happen automatically if you have location services turned on for your camera and the iNaturalist app. If location services are disabled on your phone, you will have to manually enter your location when creating your observation.

Can I take an observation of anything?

Yes... and no. Observations on the iNaturalist app are restricted to living things, primarily wild organisms. Observations of captive animals, garden plants, and the like are ok but should be marked as captive/cultivated, which you can do when creating an observation. For the purposes of ALT's Biodiversity Survey, all wild living things on our four public properties are fair game for observation (and highly encouraged)!

Can I upload old photos as observations?

Yes, as long as you know the date and location where the photo was taken, you are welcome to upload them as observations.

How confident do I need to be to make a species identification?

When making an observation, you should identify the individual to the level of detail that you know. For some people, that might mean identifying the species, for example a white oak. Others might just put oak or even plant. Whatever you do, don't leave the identification line blank, which can lead to observations getting lost in the iNaturalist ether. Adding an identification, even if it's one that seems obvious (like plant), can help other iNaturalist users find your observation and identify it with more specificity (or confirm your original ID).

How can I see what's already been observed?

Each of ALT's public four properties – Spruce Acres Farm, Little Creek Preserve, Oakland Forest and Meadow Preserve, and the Sakonnet Greenway Trail – have a distinct iNaturalist project pages. On these pages you can find a list of the species observed, along with other data about the project. But don't worry too much about what's already been observed and definitely don't pass on an observation just because you think the species is too common. Having repeat observations of the same species is actually a good thing because it gives us a better idea of the relative abundance of different species within our properties!

Who should I reach out to with questions?

If you have questions or are looking for more information about the project, please reach out to Sean Grandy, ALT's Stewardship Manager, at sgrandy@ailt.org.