



## Your Guide to Becoming a Nature Detective!

### What Is iNaturalist?

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Have you ever spotted a cool bug, a strange mushroom, or a bird you couldn't name — and wished you had a way to find out what it was?

**That's exactly what iNaturalist is for!**

iNaturalist is a FREE app and website where you can:

- Take photos of plants, animals, fungi, and bugs
- Get help identifying what you've found
- Share your discoveries with scientists and nature-lovers worldwide
- Help build a huge map of all the living things on Earth!

It was created in 2008 and is now used by millions of people — from curious kids and adults all the way to professional scientists!

#### Why does it matter?

Every time you submit an observation, it becomes part of a huge scientific database. Researchers use this data to track where animals live, spot new species, and help protect nature. You — yes, YOU — can help scientists do their work just by going outside with your phone!

### How to Sign Up

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Signing up is totally free and only takes a few minutes. If you're a kid – ask a parent or guardian for help.

#### STEP 1: Download the App

1. On your phone or tablet, open the **App Store (iPhone)** or **Google Play Store (Android)**.
2. Search for "**iNaturalist**" and tap Install. It's free!

#### STEP 2: Create Your Account

3. Open the app and tap "**Sign Up.**"

4. Enter your name, choose a username, and add your email. You can also sign in with Google or Apple.
5. Check your email for a confirmation link and click it.
6. When the app asks for permission to use your **camera and location**, tap Allow — these help record exactly where and what you found!

#### Username Tip


Pick a fun username that feels like you — like 'BeetleFanatic' or 'PNW\_Explorer'. This is how other naturalists will know you on the platform!





## Getting Around the App

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Once you're logged in, here are the main parts of the app to know:

 **Explore:** See observations from other people on a map. You can browse what's been spotted near your home or school!

 **Observe:** This is where YOU submit your own discoveries. Tap the big green button!

 **Identify:** Help other people figure out what they found. Even beginners can vote on identifications!

 **Me:** See all your observations, how many species you've found, and your activity.

#### The AI Helper

When you upload a photo, iNaturalist's smart computer (called Computer Vision) will try to guess what you found. It's usually pretty good — but it can make mistakes, especially with blurry photos. Always double-check its suggestions and see if the community agrees!



## Finding Golden Gardens Park

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Want to see what plants and animals have already been spotted at Golden Gardens Park in Eugene, Oregon? Here's how:

7. Open iNaturalist and tap **Explore** at the bottom of the screen.
8. Tap the **search bar at the top** of the map.
9. Type "**Golden Gardens Park, Eugene, Oregon**" and tap Search.

10. The map will zoom in and show colored dots — each one is a real observation!
11. Tap any dot to see the photo, the species name, and the date it was found.
12. Use the filters to search for specific types, like "**Birds**," "**Reptiles**," or "**Plants**."

### **Look out for this species!**

Golden Gardens Park is home to the Northwestern Pond Turtle — a species that needs our help! If you visit the park, keep an eye out near any water. If you spot one, photograph it carefully (stay quiet and don't disturb it) and record your observation. That data is really valuable for scientists!

## **Taking Great Nature Photos**

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The better your photo, the easier it is for the AI and other naturalists to help you identify your discovery!

### **Top Tips for Great Observation Photos:**

- Get close — but not so close that the photo is blurry!
- Take a photo of the **WHOLE** organism first, then take close-ups of interesting parts
- For plants: photograph the leaves, flowers, stem, and bark if possible
- For animals: try to capture the face, body, wings, or tail
- Use natural light — go outside during the day for best results
- Take several photos from different angles — more is better!
- Keep your phone/camera steady. Hold your breath for a second before you tap!

### **Lighting Secret**

Bright shade (like under a tree on a sunny day) is often better than full sun. Full sun can wash out details and create harsh shadows — just like a photo of your face can look weird in midday sun!

## **How to Upload and Submit**

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Ready to share your find with the world? Here's how:

13. Open the app and tap the big **green + button** in the middle of the screen.
14. Choose "**Take Photo**" to snap a new one, or "**Choose from Library**" to pick one you already took.
15. Select your best photo (you can add up to 20 for one observation!).

16. The app will show you species suggestions. Tap the best one if it looks right — or tap **"I don't know"** and let the community help.
17. Check that the **date and location** are correct. If GPS was on when you took the photo, these fill in automatically!
18. Add a **note in the description box** — was it flying? Hiding under a log? Near water? These clues help with identification!
19. Tap **SHARE!** Your observation is now live.

## ★ What Happens After You Submit?

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**This is the really exciting part!**

After you submit, other iNaturalist users — and maybe even scientists — can see your observation and help identify it. If two or more people agree on the same species, your observation becomes:

### ★ RESEARCH GRADE ★

That means your observation gets shared with a global scientific database called GBIF, and researchers around the world can use it in their work. Pretty incredible, right?

#### **Achievement Unlocked: Nature Scientist!**

The more observations you submit, the more species you'll discover. Some iNaturalist users have recorded over 10,000 species! Start with what's in your backyard, your school, or your local park — you might be surprised what's living right next to you.

## Explorer's Quick Tips

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- If you're a kid - always get permission from a parent or guardian before going to observe nature
- Never disturb animals — observe from a distance and don't touch them
- As tempting as it may be, don't pick flowers.
- Stay on trails and be respectful of the environment
- Keep your phone charged before a nature walk!
- Make sure location services (GPS) is turned ON before you leave home
- Take your time — sometimes the best finds are the ones you almost walked past!