



Your Step-by-Step Guide to Becoming a BC Parks Citizen Scientist



bcparksfoundation.ca/inaturalist
#iNatBCParks

Calling All Citizen Scientists

The BC Parks iNaturalist Project is bringing together citizen scientists – British Columbians, visitors and anyone who enjoys B.C.'s provincial parks and protected areas – to document biodiversity in B.C.'s parks using iNaturalist.

By using this powerful, trusted mobile app and website to document observations of plants, animals and other organisms, British Columbians and park visitors can contribute to the understanding of life found in B.C.'s parks and protected areas.

The BC Parks iNaturalist Project is a collaboration between:



BC Parks



University of Victoria



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

What is iNaturalist.org?

iNaturalist is a mobile phone app and website used around the world to crowdsource observations of plants, animals and other organisms. Users upload photos of observations and iNaturalist's image recognition software suggests the identity of the organism.

A community of keen citizen scientists called "identifiers" then confirm the identity of documented species, helping correct any errors and verify observations to make them research grade.

Why is citizen science important?

Your observations through the BC Parks iNaturalist Project create an interactive record of your own explorations in B.C.'s parks and protected areas, while helping improve the understanding of the species that live in or travel through our province.

You may come across rare species, species at risk and species that aren't well-studied. Your observations may help track population and distribution changes over time as a result of factors such as climate change.

It's free. It's fun. Plus, while you're learning about nature and how to identify species, you're also helping B.C.'s parks.



Getting Started on iNaturalist

You only need three things to get involved in the
BC Parks iNaturalist Project:

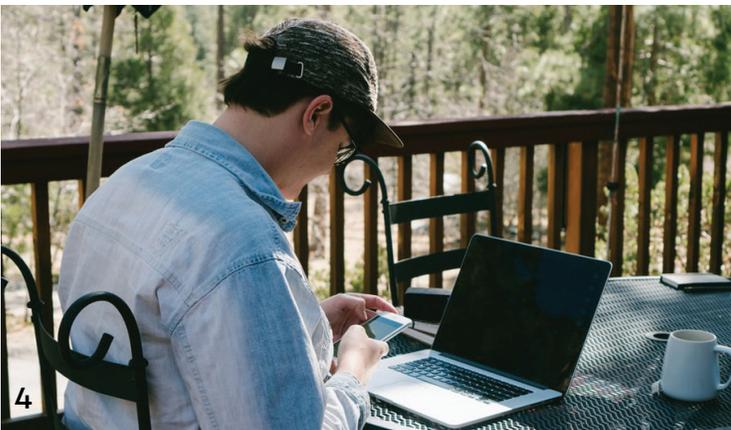


1 An iNaturalist account.

Sign up on [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org).

Join the BC Parks project.

2 A smartphone or camera to capture your observations.



3 A smartphone or computer to upload photos to your account.

Use the iNaturalist mobile app or visit [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org).

How to Make & Record an Observation

Step 1: Get your smartphone or camera ready

Turn on your location services or GPS function. If your camera does not have GPS, make note of where you're collecting information.

Step 2: Make an observation

Take photos of wild organisms: plants, animals, fungi or other signs of life such as a nest or tracks.

Take multiple photos of each finding with different features, angles and sizes, with close-ups and wide-angle shots.

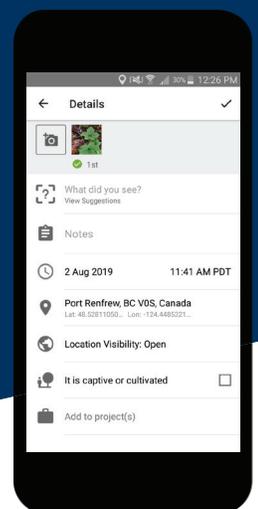
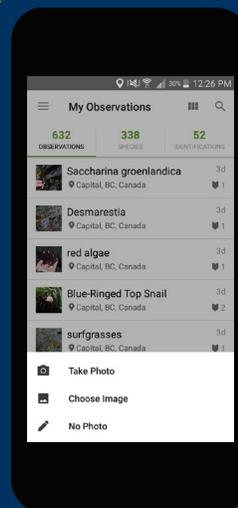
Any observations you make within B.C. parks and protected areas will be automatically included in the BC Parks project!

Step 3: Upload your observation

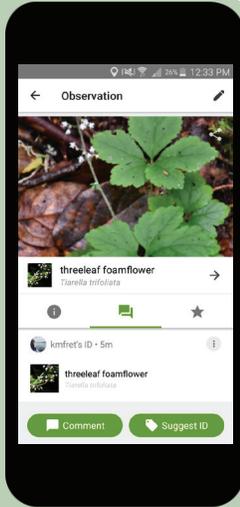
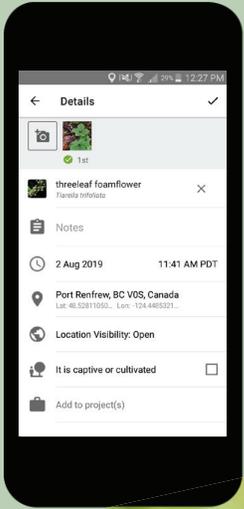
Use the iNaturalist app or iNaturalist.org. The app is great for on-the-spot uploads and identification, while the website makes it easy to upload multiple photos and observations at once.

Fill in details of the observation yourself or choose from iNaturalist's suggestions.

Don't know what you're looking at? Choose a broader group such as "mosses" or "grasses." This helps the iNaturalist community find and identify your observation.



How to Make & Record an Observation



Step 4: Share your observation

Upload your photo through the app or website. If you don't have internet access you can still save your observation to your app's account and upload it later.

Step 5: Revisit previous observations to see their progress

Your uploaded and submitted observations are automatically shared with the iNaturalist community.

Other citizen scientists can comment on your observations, confirm what you saw and provide identification suggestions.

You can be notified of this activity on your account or through email notifications.

Step 6: Show your community what you found

For a chance to be featured in the BC Parks Foundation e-newsletter or on their social media channels, post your observations on Instagram and tag @bcparksfdn and #iNatBCParks - after you upload them to the iNaturalist app or website, of course!



iNaturalist Photography Tips

What to photograph to make the best observation



Plants

Petals, leaves, stem and base.



Trees Shrubs

Close-ups of bark and leaves, wide shot of the whole plant.



Mushrooms

Underside, top and sides.



Snails

Shell opening and both sides of the shell (if you can without disturbing them).



Mollusks

Hinge where the two shell halves meet and inside the shell if it's empty.



Dragonflies

Side shots are best with a close-up of the tail. From above if it has a distinctive wing pattern.



Bugs Beetles Crabs Spiders

From above and from the front to show mouthparts or claws.



Small Organisms

Include an object in the photo to help show size. This could be as simple as your hand, lens cap or a pencil.

Any observation

Get close to the organism without disturbing it or going off-trail.

Crop the image so identifiers can see it clearly.

Take photos of as many angles as you can.

You can upload sound recordings as observations. This is helpful for when you hear a bird but can't see it clearly enough for a photo.

Try not to touch the organism. Lotions and sunscreen can be toxic.



Challenge Other Nature Enthusiasts

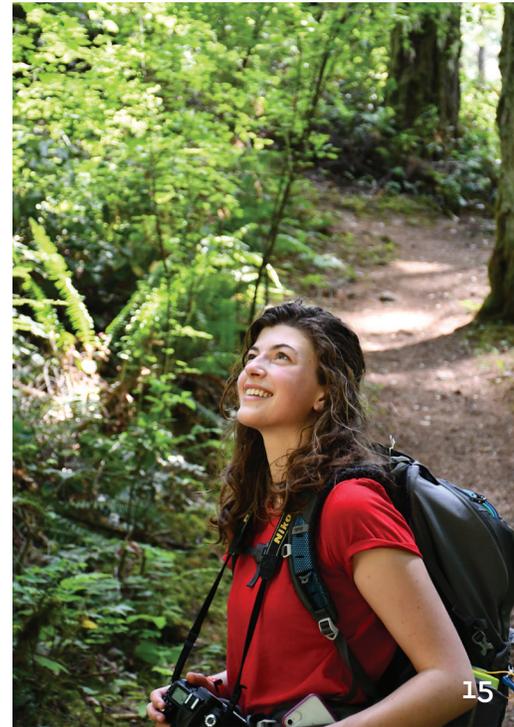
Individuals: Go head-to-head

Get your friends, family, peers and/or colleagues to sign up for an iNaturalist account.

See how many observations each of you can make in a day, a week or a month!

Or, use one of our parks bingo cards and see who can get bingo or fill out their card the fastest.

Download bingo cards at bcparksfoundation.ca/inaturalist.



Clubs and Groups: Bring the team together

Sign up for an iNaturalist account either as a group with one leader uploading observations on behalf of everyone, or have your members sign up individually and track progress through their own profiles.

Have members put the club or chapter name in their bios and observation tags to track your activity!

Gamify it

Challenge another club, chapter or group to see how many observations you can make.

Host a one-day bioblitz across your organization to see who can make the most observations.

Use one (or many!) of our bingo cards and see who can get bingo or fill out their card the fastest.

The club, group or chapter with the most observations or the first to get parks bingo wins!



9 Easy Ways to be a Park Steward



Get outside and into parks

There's no better way to support parks than to visit them. Get outside and get energized to give back to the places you love.

Be careful with fire

Even the smallest of sparks can start a wildfire. Always obey fire and smoking bans, put out campfires and dispose of your cigarette butts and garbage safely.

Stick to the trail

Unfortunately, one person's off-trail footsteps can quickly become a well-trodden path. It can lead to compacted soil, trampled plants, lost people and altered habitats. Technology like binoculars, long-range cameras and your camera's zoom feature can help you capture observations while staying on existing trails to help ensure nature remains unharmed.

Give wildlife their space

Getting too close to wildlife to get a good photo can be dangerous for both you and the wildlife you're observing. It can make life more stressful for the animals and can lead them to respond aggressively or otherwise alter their natural behaviours. Give them plenty of space and back away if you see signs of stress or aggression.

Let wildlife feed themselves

Feeding wild animals can either make them sick or make them unafraid of humans, putting both the animals and people in danger. You can help the wildlife by ensuring they don't rely on human food. If you come across an animal in distress, contact the local park ranger.

Take only photos, leave only footprints

The goal is to leave everything the way you found it, including rocks, shells, plants and animals. Of course, clean up any of the messes you create along the way and try to pack out more garbage than you packed in.

Volunteer

Whether it's helping with trail maintenance or joining a cleanup crew, it takes an active community to keep parks beautiful and you can become a vital part of the initiative. It can even be as simple as picking up any trash you see on your outdoor adventures!

Spread the love

Share your knowledge and passion for the parks with your friends. Talk about the beauty of B.C. and the risks it faces and inspire others through your actions.

Donate

The simplest and most effective thing you can do to support and sustain parks is to donate. Every gift you give to the BC Parks Foundation helps sustain the beauty of parks for future generations. Visit bcparksfoundation.ca/donate to leave your legacy, today.



BC Parks iNaturalist FAQs

What is the BC Parks iNaturalist Project?

The BC Parks iNaturalist Project is an initiative to help understand the biodiversity found in 1,000+ provincial parks and protected areas across British Columbia by empowering park users to become citizen scientists.

By collecting photographic observations of plants, animals and other organisms and natural features (like nests or paw prints) every time you visit a provincial park or protected area and uploading these images to the iNaturalist mobile app or website, you're helping researchers develop a deeper understanding of what B.C.'s parks are protecting and helping inform management decisions to sustain these areas for generations to come.

Why was the BC Parks iNaturalist Project created?

The BC Parks iNaturalist Project was created to improve our understanding of the biodiversity within the provincial parks and protected areas, and use this information to help inform management strategies.

Who is involved in the project?

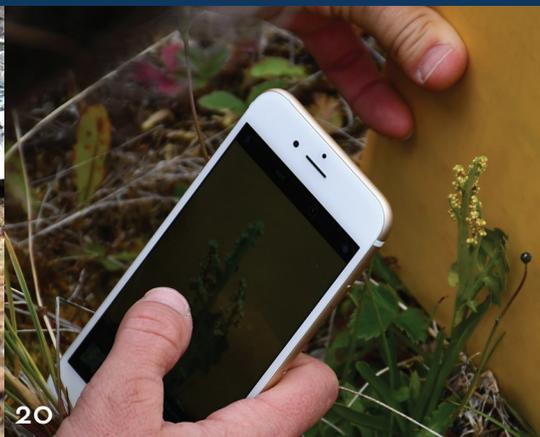
The BC Parks iNaturalist Project is a collaboration between the University of Victoria, Simon Fraser University, BC Parks and the BC Parks Foundation.

Where can I find the BC Parks iNaturalist Project?

Please visit the project site at inaturalist.org/projects/bc-parks.

When was the BC Parks iNaturalist Project created?

The BC Parks iNaturalist Project launched in 2019.



BC Parks iNaturalist FAQs

How can I participate in the BC Parks iNaturalist Project?

Every time you upload an observation within the boundaries of a provincial park or protected area, the observation will automatically be added to the project. You can join the project and stay connected to other naturalists who are also participating.

How many parks are included within the BC Parks iNaturalist Project?

There are currently over 1,000 provincial parks, protected areas, ecological reserves and conservancies spanning more than 14 million hectares of protected land across British Columbia.

What should I bring with me when I'm making iNaturalist observations?

All you need is a phone with camera and GPS enabled. Ensure you have appropriate clothing and supplies for the terrain you will be in. Always be safe!

Some other supplies you may want to bring:

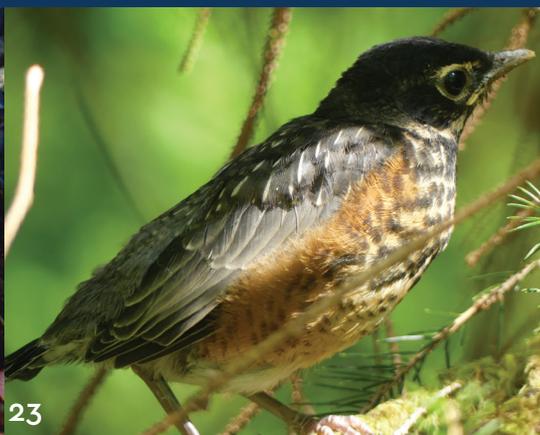
- Field guides
- A camera with a macro or telephoto lens, or a phone with a clip-on macro lens
- Spare batteries and/or a portable charger
- Binoculars
- Global Positioning System (GPS), if your camera is not GPS enabled
- Waterproof notebook and pencil
- Tracking ruler or regular six to twelve-inch ruler

Are there other ways I can support the project?

Through the BC Parks Foundation, you can support citizen scientists collecting critical data about B.C.'s wildlife and their habitat for \$39.75, or you can help researchers collect and analyze wildlife DNA samples to better understand the health, abundance and distribution of our most treasured wildlife with a donation of \$231.87. To contribute to this program, visit bcparksfoundation.ca/donate and select the Wildlife Forever program.

Where can I learn more?

Visit bcparksfoundation.ca/inaturalist or email citizenscience@bcparksfoundation.ca.



Thank you.



BC Parks



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of Victoria



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Thank you to the BC Parks iNaturalist Project field team and Unsplash Images for use of their photos:

1. Photographer: Kelly Fretwell. Pictured: Field team member Kiara Gannon photographing intertidal species on North Beach in Naikoon Provincial Park.
 2. Photographer: Katie Kushneryk. Pictured: Barred owl in the Lundmark Bog Protected Area.
 3. Photographer: Li Shanting, Unsplash Images
 4. Photographer: Tikkho Miciel, Unsplash Images
 5. Photographer: Genevieve Reynolds. Pictured: Evan Goh making an iNaturalist observation.
 6. Photographer: Katie Kushneryk. Pictured: Melissa blue (*Plebejus melissa*) in the White Lake Grasslands Protected Area.
 7. Photographer: Genevieve Reynolds. Pictured: Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*) and threeleaf foamflower (*Tiarella trifoliata*) in Goldstream Provincial Park.
 8. Photographer: Kelly Fretwell. Pictured: Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) in Naikoon Provincial Park.
 9. Photographer: Genevieve Reynolds. Pictured: Turkey tail (*Trametes versicolor*) in Pinecone Burke Provincial Park.
 10. Photographer: Kiara Gannon. Pictured: Northwest hesperian (*Vespericola columbianus*) in the Kunxalas Heritage Site/Conservancy.
 11. Photographer: Kelly Fretwell. California mussels (*Mytilus californianus*) and Gooseneck Barnacles (*Pollicipes polymerus*) on Botanical Beach at Juan de Fuca Provincial Park.
 12. Photographer: Jason Headley. Pictured: Four-spotted skimmer (*Libellula quadrimaculata*) in the Yaaguun Suu Heritage Site/Conservancy.
 13. Photographer: Kelly Fretwell. Pictured: Purple shore crab (*Hemigrapsus nudus*) in the Tlall Heritage Site/Conservancy.
 14. Photographer: Lena Dietz Chiasson Pictured: iNaturalist in action in Kitsumkalum Provincial Park.
 15. Photographer: Kelly Fretwell. Pictured: Field team member Genevieve Reynolds in Goldstream Provincial Park.
 16. Photographer: Kelly Fretwell. Pictured: The iNaturalist bioblitz participants exploring the intertidal of the Hakai Luxvbalis Conservancy.
 17. Photographer: Genevieve Reynolds. Pictured: The field team in the Mahoney Lake Ecological Reserve.
 18. Photographer: Kiara Gannon. Pictured: The field team in Junction Sheep Provincial Park.
 19. Photographer: Genevieve Reynolds. Pictured: Wolf's milk slime (*Lycogala epidendrum*) in the Hakai Luxvbalis Conservancy.
 20. Photographer: Kelly Fretwell. Pictured: A field team member photographing common moonwort (*Botrychium lunaria*) in Naikoon Provincial Park.
 21. Photographer: Kelly Fretwell. Pictured: Giant red Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja miniata*) in the Hakai Luxvbalis Conservancy.
 22. Photographer: Kelly Fretwell. Pictured: Giant green anemone (*Anthopleura xanthogrammica*) on Botanical Beach at Juan de Fuca Provincial Park.
 23. Photographer: Katie Kushneryk. Pictured: American robin (*Turdus migratorius*) in Exchamsiks Provincial Park.
 24. Photographer: Lena Dietz Chiasson. Pictured: Aster species in Gwillim Lake Provincial Park.
- Additional credits to Tom Tom, Made, fae frey and Ralf Schmitzer from the Noun Project.

If you'd like to continue supporting projects like this, please consider donating to the BC Parks Foundation at bcparksfoundation.ca/donate.

parks forever.