

## [iNaturalist](#)

**iNaturalist** is a global community of people who record observations of organisms and share them with each other so all of us can learn more about the natural world.

One of the world's most popular nature apps, iNaturalist helps you identify the plants and animals around you. Get connected with a community of over a million scientists and naturalists who can help you learn more about nature! What's more, by recording and sharing your observations, you'll create research quality data for scientists working to better understand and protect nature. iNaturalist is a joint initiative by the California Academy of Sciences and the National Geographic Society.

Part of your participation in the Mt Rogers Naturalist Rally: "Scavenger Hunt Edition" provides the opportunity for you to share your findings with the community! This citizen science project allows you to contribute data about the biodiversity of the region and the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area. The links below will help you get started using this great sharing tool!

- [Getting Started](#) will walk you through some of the main features of the iNaturalist site.
- [Video Tutorials](#) will assist you with using iNaturalist on your mobile device and the web site.
- [Community Guidelines](#) describe what they consider good and bad behavior. They are guidelines and heuristics for how you should conduct yourselves on iNaturalist.

Check out [Seek by iNaturalist](#) which is an educational tool built on iNaturalist. It may be a better fit for you than iNaturalist because it doesn't actually post observations to iNaturalist, but still provides some tools such as automated species identification and nature journaling. We suggest Seek as the easier alternative for young beginner naturalists. Remember...it will not post your observation to the project!

### **Be Sure to Make Useful Observations**

**Take identifiable photos:** Photos of distant trees or speck-like birds will not garner much attention because they're usually hard to identify, so make sure you fill the frame with your subject, perhaps using the phone or camera's zoom. Because smartphone cameras are designed primarily for photographing humans and landscapes (and, apparently, food), taking an in-focus photo of an insect or a plant is actually quite difficult. Using your hand to hold a flower or plant still can be helpful, but make sure the plant is not dangerous.

**Take multiple photos:** Many organisms, particularly plants and insects, cannot be identified to species from a single photo. Take multiple photos from different angles (top, bottom, side, front, back), and/or photos showing different features of the organism. For plants it's especially important to take pictures of flowers or fruit. Photos of flowers or fruit AND leaves are the most helpful. Be sure to add multiple photos of the same organism to the same observation.

**Focus on wild organisms:** In general, the iNat community is more interested in wild organisms, and respond more to pictures of weeds and bugs than to cultivated roses and animals in cages. If you do make observations of garden plants or other non-wild organisms, make sure to mark those observations as "Captive/Cultivated" before uploading them.

**Pay attention to metadata:** Metadata is the additional information associated with a photo that captures when and (often) where a photo was originally taken. If you post photos that are screenshots of photos, they will lose the original data which may result in incorrect data entry. Depending on the method used, sharing photos between two devices may also lose important metadata such as location. Watch for locations and dates that may not make sense. If your photo device does not collect metadata or you have it turned off, be sure to record the date, time and exact location of your observations.

Works Cited

*iNaturalist.org*, Feb, 2021, [www.inaturalist.org](http://www.inaturalist.org)