

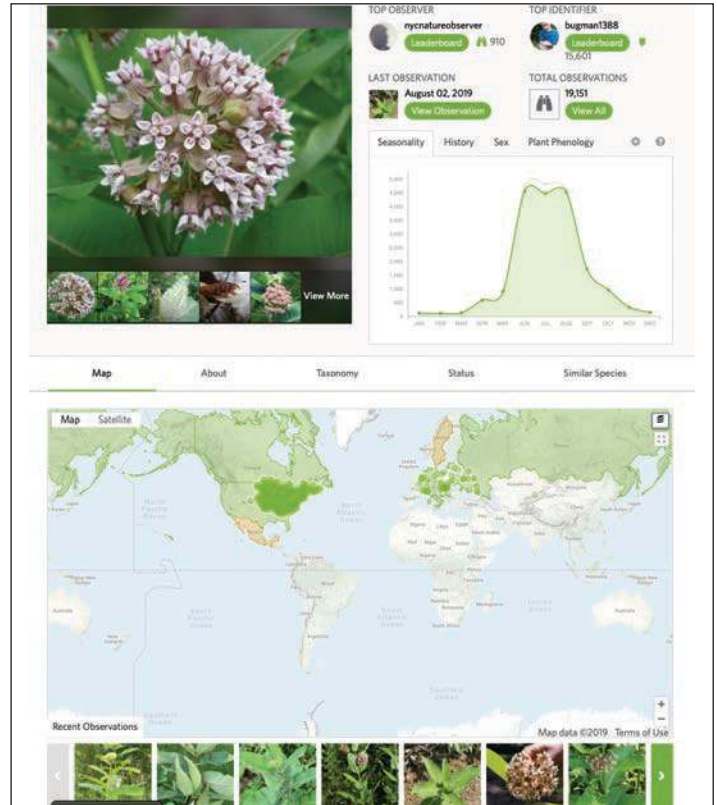
iNaturalist: Sharing Nature

For Newton Conservators and other nature lovers, the iNaturalist phone app has much to offer. Begun as a Master's final project at Berkeley School of Information in 2008, iNaturalist has blossomed into an important initiative of the California Academy of Sciences in 2014, joined in 2017 by National Geographic. For those of us who like to pester our walking companions with questions about the name of this tree or that plant or this animal, iNaturalist has come to our rescue.



Equipped with an iPhone, Android smartphone or Android tablet or iPad, go to the App Store, where you can download iNaturalist for free. The iNaturalist website (<https://www.inaturalist.org/>) describes itself as “an online social network of people sharing biodiversity information to help each other learn about nature.” Using its resources, you can take pictures of an unknown plant, tree, or insect, for example, and watch your phone offer its best guess with answers

sorted by the most likely to additional possibilities. In its answers, it shows photos and authoritative background information about each mystery subject as well as maps that show where the photo was taken.



Want to verify the invasive plant you are hoping to eradicate? Go to iNaturalist. Want to make sure you can distinguish twice-cut, thrice-cut ferns in your back yard? Double check it with the iNaturalist experts from around the world (including Don Lubin, who leads fern walks for the Newton Conservators and participates in iNaturalist). Your encounters with nature will never be the same. ♦

🌿 Ken Mallory

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

