

Branching out with iNaturalist – some favorite possibilities

by Janet Wright (janetwright on [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org/)), Spring 2022

This guide was written for the Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage at Great Smoky Mountains National Park, so I assume you're already familiar with using the iNaturalist mobile app. If you're not, here's a quick introduction: https://www.inaturalist.org/pages/video%252Btutorials#add_mob. Now, let's branch out to see what else iNaturalist has to offer, on the mobile app and website!

BRANCH #1: Discover Projects! at website iNaturalist.org

A "Project" brings together observations on a particular topic. iNat users have made thousands of projects. Check these samples out at [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org/), or find others by clicking on Community → Projects. You can make your own project! The Project tab tells how. If you "join" a project, it will also show up on your mobile app (at Projects Tab)

Great Smoky Mountains Biodiversity Inventory: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/smokies-atbi>

Pollinators of Virginia: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/pollinators-of-virginia>

Georgia Grasslands Initiative: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/georgia-grasslands-initiative-ggi>

Tracking invasion of Cuban Tree Frog: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/cuban-tree-frog-invasion>

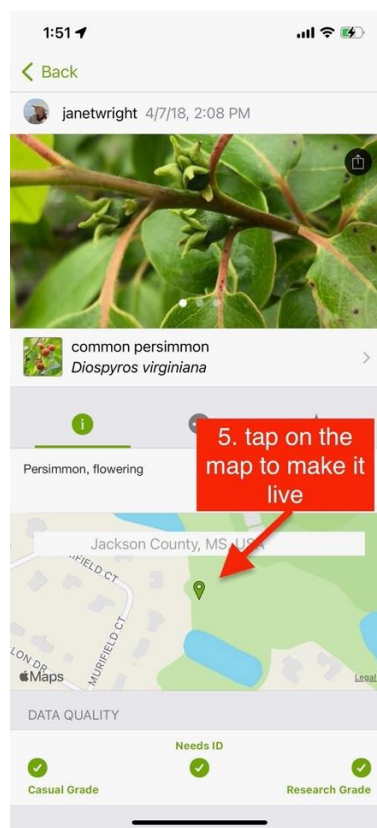
A small nature preserve in MS, saved with citizen efforts:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/lee-tartt-nature-preserve>

BRANCH #2: Track down someone else's (or your own old) find (Mobile app)

This spring I found a persimmon tree full of green fruit and posted it on iNaturalist. I can go back for some harvest in the fall, and iNaturalist will show me where to go!

HOW TO DO IT (Mobile app):

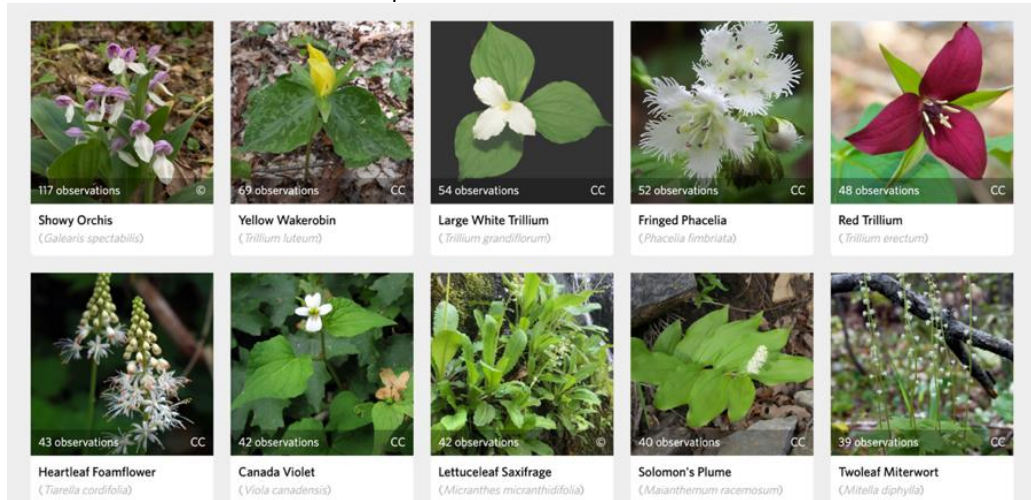


BRANCH #3: Make your own preview field guide for your next foray.

Going to a new place? Use iNaturalist to preview the living things you're most likely to see. With this list in hand as a field guide or scavenger hunt list, you'll notice more and learn a lot!

HOW TO DO IT:

1. Go to website [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org).
2. In "Explore" tab, "Map" view, zero in on the area you'll be visiting. Hit the "Redo search in map" button.
3. If you want to limit your search to plants, birds, insects, etc., put that in the "Species" box (to the right of "Explore"), and hit return. (You can even make the guide seasonally relevant: Use the "filters" tab to narrow observations to one or two months of the year.)
4. Click on the "Species" tab (the tab that shows number of species). The view changes to a grid with the most observed species shown first. That's your field guide!
5. I like to screen-shot the first 30 pictures and print them out for a guide or scavenger hunt list that I can use in the field and check off each species as I find it.



BRANCH #4: Meet your biodiversity soulmates.

People who share your passion for passionflowers, or your liking for nature hiking, are on iNaturalist! You can meet them virtually or even face to face.

TO FIND PEOPLE WHO LIKE OBSERVING YOUR FAVE TAXON in YOUR FAVE PLACE:

1. On iNaturalist.org, use Explore tab and Map mode.
2. In the "Species" box, type a taxon (Salamanders, Plants, Tiger Beetles) and in the "Location" box type a location ("Tennessee"). Choose the appropriate drop-down choice.
3. Click on the "Observers" tab to get a list of the main observers of that taxon in that region. Click on their names to get their profile and learn more about them. Then "follow" them, @tag them in a comment, or send a direct message to their inbox. (Be careful not to be a pest, of course.)

