

CWA Café: CNC Chicagoland Info Session



April 25 - April 28, 2026

Join the Chicagoland Project
on iNaturalist:



<https://bit.ly/cncchi2025>

Emily Kenny

Forest Preserve District of Will County

David Bild

Windy City Bird Lab

Cat Principe

The Nature Conservancy

CJ Greco

Lincoln Park Zoo



Bringing People and Nature Together



**CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT
NATURAL AREAS**

CITY NATURE CHALLENGE IS ORGANIZED BY



Windy City Bird Lab



CALIFORNIA
ACADEMY OF
SCIENCES



LINCOLN PARK ZOO.
FOR WILDLIFE. FOR ALL.



**chicago
botanic
garden**
REGENSTEIN SCHOOL



What is the City Nature Challenge (CNC)



- It's a community science project
 - Public participation in scientific research
- It's a **bioblitz-style competition** using iNaturalist where cities around the world see who can
 - **make the most observations of nature,**
 - find the most species, and
 - engage the most people
 - in a 4-day period each spring
- Focus is on wild plants, animals, mushrooms (*not pets or planted plants*)

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CALIFORNIA
ACADEMY OF
SCIENCES



Powered by
iNaturalist

Why is there a City Nature Challenge (CNC) ?

- For the first-ever Citizen Science Day in 2016, NHM (Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County) and California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco teamed up to capitalize on their home cities' friendly rivalry
- It was an eight-day competition between Los Angeles and San Francisco, **engaging residents and visitors in documenting nature to better understand urban biodiversity**
- Almost 20,000 observations were made by more than 1,000 people in a one-week period, cataloging approximately 1,600 species in each location, including new records for both areas
- In 2017 the City Nature Challenge went national and Chicago was included with 13 additional cities
- In 2018 the CNC became an international event!

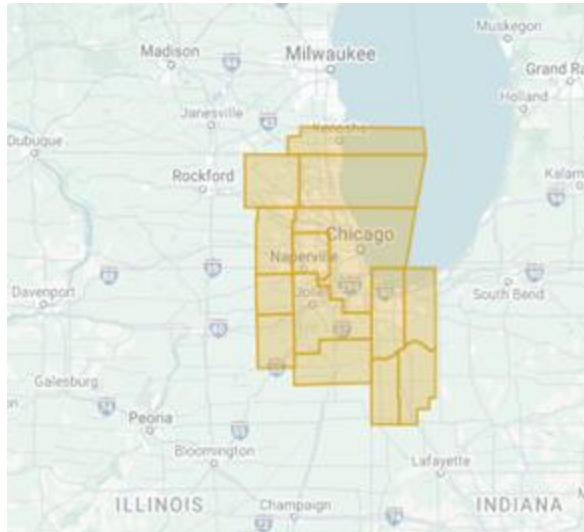
When is the City Nature Challenge (CNC) ?

- CNC has two parts:
 - A four-day global bioblitz: April 24 – 27, 2026
 - An identification period: April 28 - May 10, 2026
- Results are announced on May 13, 2026



Where is the City Nature Challenge (CNC) ?

- Global!
- In Illinois:
 - Chicagoland Region



Where Can I Find Nature ?

Anywhere with “wild” plants, animals, fungi (everywhere!)

- Forest preserves
- Parks
- Your backyard or neighborhood
- Even inside your house



Who Can Participate in the City Nature Challenge (CNC) ?

Anyone who can take a digital photo and upload it to iNaturalist

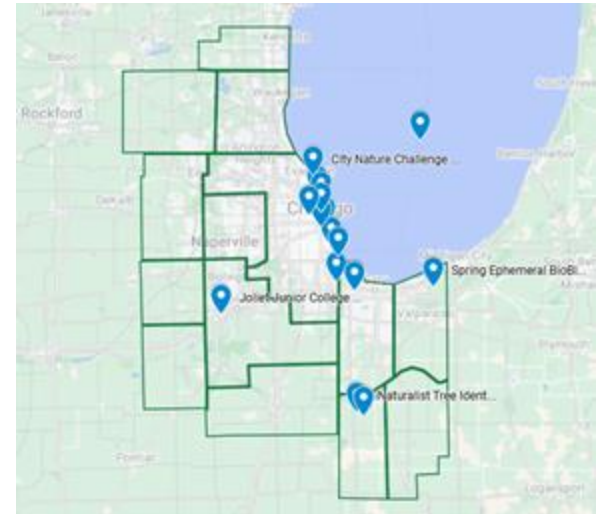
- Anyone who can help identify wild flora or fauna

-
- Individuals are welcome to join an existing project
 - There is also a global project if no local project exists



How Can My Organization Participate in the CNC?

- If your city falls within an existing project area (e.g. Chicagoland)...
 - Observations shared to the iNaturalist app or website are automatically added to the project
 - Send us your events before April 1!
 - mini bioblitzes at your parks
 - guided nature hikes
 - naturalist meet-ups
 - identification days
 - iNaturalist workshops/trainings



Can I Really Make A Difference?



10 City Nature Challenge 2025 Results



3,310,131
Observations

Contributed by community scientists worldwide

73,765+
Species

Including 3,338 rare/threatened/ endangered

102,945
People

From 669 cities in 62 countries on 6 continents

Founded in Los Angeles and San Francisco in 2016

10 years of bringing the world together for biodiversity

12,948,135
Observations

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Cities	2	16	68	159	244	419	445	482	690	669
Countries	1	1	17	28	40	44	47	46	51	62
Observations	19.8K	125K	441K	963K	815K	1.27M	1.9M	2.4M	3.3M	
Species	2.5K	8.6K	18K	31K	32.6K	45.3K	50.1K	57.2K	65.7K	73.7K
Observers	1K	4K	17K	32K	41K	52K	67.2K	66.4K	83.5K	103K

113,320
Species

363,723
People

K = thousand M = million

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CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES



NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM LOS ANGELES COUNTY

CityNatureChallenge.org @CitNatChallenge

Featured observations from around the world



1. Pacific Trillium
BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA
found by Joan Seppembre
Rare four parted Trillium also known as a Quadlilium!



2. Townsendia pulcherrima
ARLINGTON, TEXAS, USA
found by Sam Kieschnick
First observation on iNaturalist and rarely documented species.



3. Eresus sandaliatus
AALBORG, DENMARK
found by Mikkel Rødvig
Near-threatened velvet spider found in Denmark.



4. Mediterranean Fanworm
MARSEILLE, FRANCE
found by Rohail Akbar
Sylvain Le Bris captured this fanworm along with a snail.



5. Arabian Gazelle
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
found by Rohail Akbar
Vulnerable and endemic to Asia, documented from a new city joining for 2025.



14. Chisos Mountain Crested Coralroot
MICHOCÁN, MEXICO
found by @elimaya
Critically endangered.



13. Brown-throated Sloth
PANAMA CITY, PANAMA
Cute sloth observed and photographed by Nathan Külling.



12. Cerro Socoopa Tree Frog
CAYENNE, FRENCH GUIANA
found by Quentin Uriot
Critically endangered and endemic, found by a new iNaturalist user.



11. Giant Sphinx
COCHABAMBA, BOLIVIA
This vibrant green caterpillar was found by Beimar Fuentes Ramos, a brand new iNaturalist user.



10. Pretzel Slime Mold
PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA
Amazing pretzel look-alike slime mold found by @Lizziepop.



9. Gold-banded Forester
MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE
found by @sarahhbanner
A beautiful observation by a brand new iNaturalist user!



8. Weedy Sea Dragon
MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA
found by @shunterfs
Vulnerable and endemic to Australia.



6. Hawksbill Sea Turtle
DAVAO, PHILIPPINES
found by Michael P. Sibbaluca
Critically endangered species documented by a new iNaturalist user.



7. Phidiana unilineata
ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA
found by Sri P. Tamalapati
A nudibranch rediscovered after 160 years!



About

Members 174

Take the City Nature Challenge! Search for wild plants, animals, and other creatures to see how many species you can find and show the world how diverse our Chicagoland Region is. Add your observations to iNaturalist and they'll

Read More >

Project Journal

Overview **13,868**
OBSERVATIONS

1,621
SPECIES

1,053
IDENTIFIERS

1,377
OBSERVERS

Stats



Most Observations

birdcite-ing

439



Most Species

eriko

209



meganhanson

141



chdphoto

139



pillwixler

138



g Morrissey001

133



rynxs

103

View All

View All



Most Observed Species

Red-winged Blackbird

234



Canada Goose

207



Virginia Bluebells

191



Common Blue Violet

188



Prairie Trillium

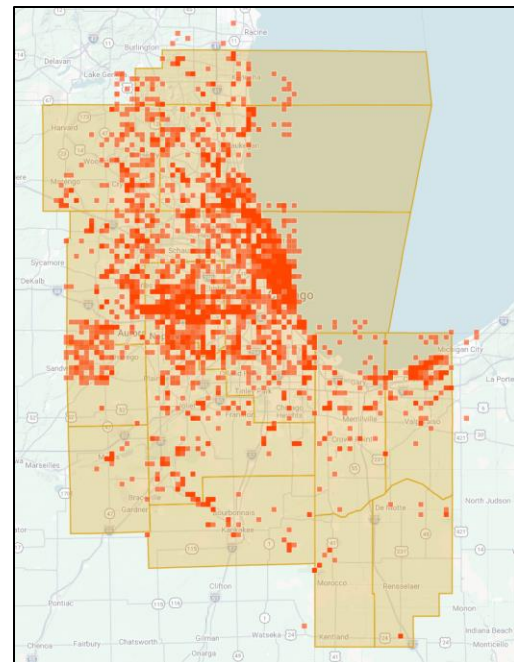
188



Mallard

163

View All





City Nature Challenge

Chicagoland Region

2024 RESULTS

Between April 26th and April 29th, 2024:

11,100

OBSERVATIONS

1,000

PARTICIPANTS

1,670

SPECIES

Powered by
iNaturalist

bit.ly/cncchi2024

MOST-OBSERVED SPECIES



PLANT

Wild geranium
Geranium maculatum



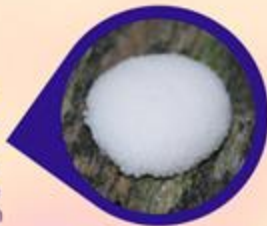
ANIMAL

Red-winged blackbird
Agelaius phoeniceus



FUNGUS

Dryad's saddle
Cerioporus squamosus



OTHER

Three-way tie between:
tapioca slime mold (*Brefeldia maxima*),
a euglenid phlagellate (*Phacus tortus*),
and rose rosette disease (*Rose rosette
emmaravirus*)

See everything we found at: bit.ly/cncchi2024



Common pawpaw by @scotstewart in Will County, IL (CC BY-NC)



MOST SPECIES

@evanrandall
Evan Randall



MOST OBSERVATIONS

@benzerante
Ben Zerante



MOST IDENTIFICATIONS

@pillwixler
William Pixler

bit.ly/cncchi2024



bit.ly/cncchi2024



CNC_Chicagoland



City Nature Challenge 2024: Chicagoland Region was organized by:



bit.ly/cncchi2024

a website
(inaturalist.org)



a place to get species
identified by
knowledgeable people

an app (iOS and
Android)

an organism
occurrence recording
tool

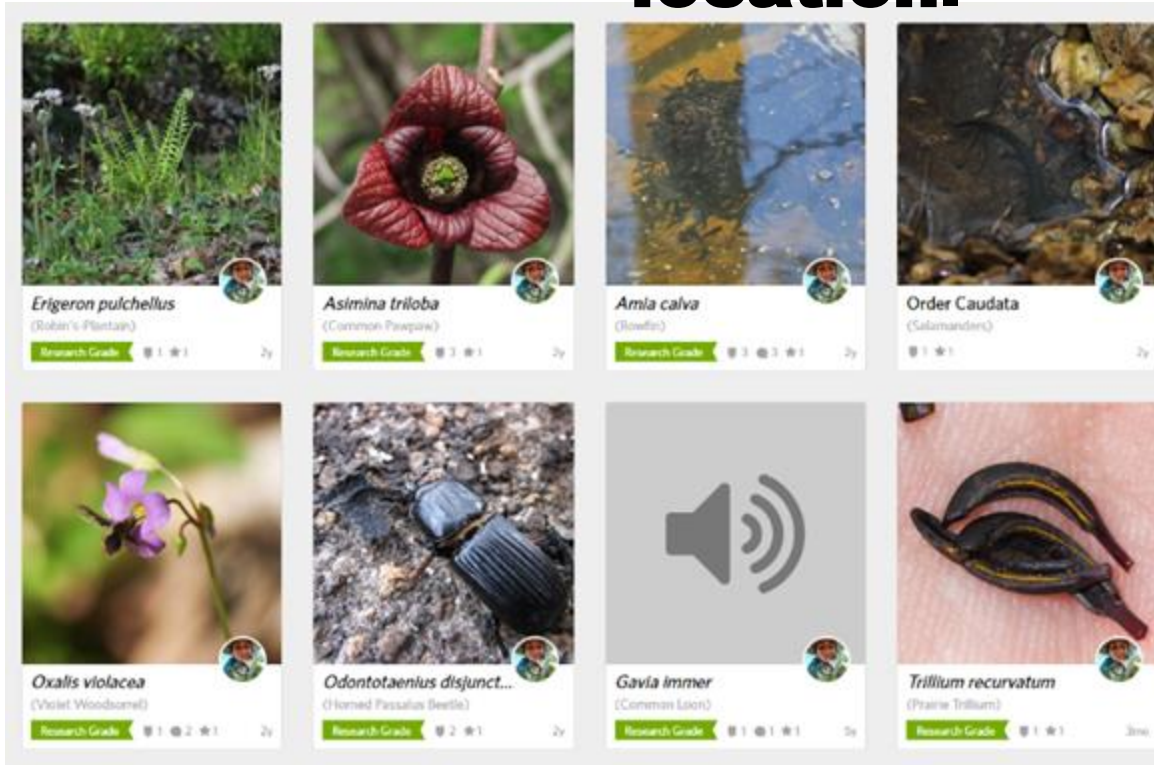
an automated species
recognition tool - "computer
vision"

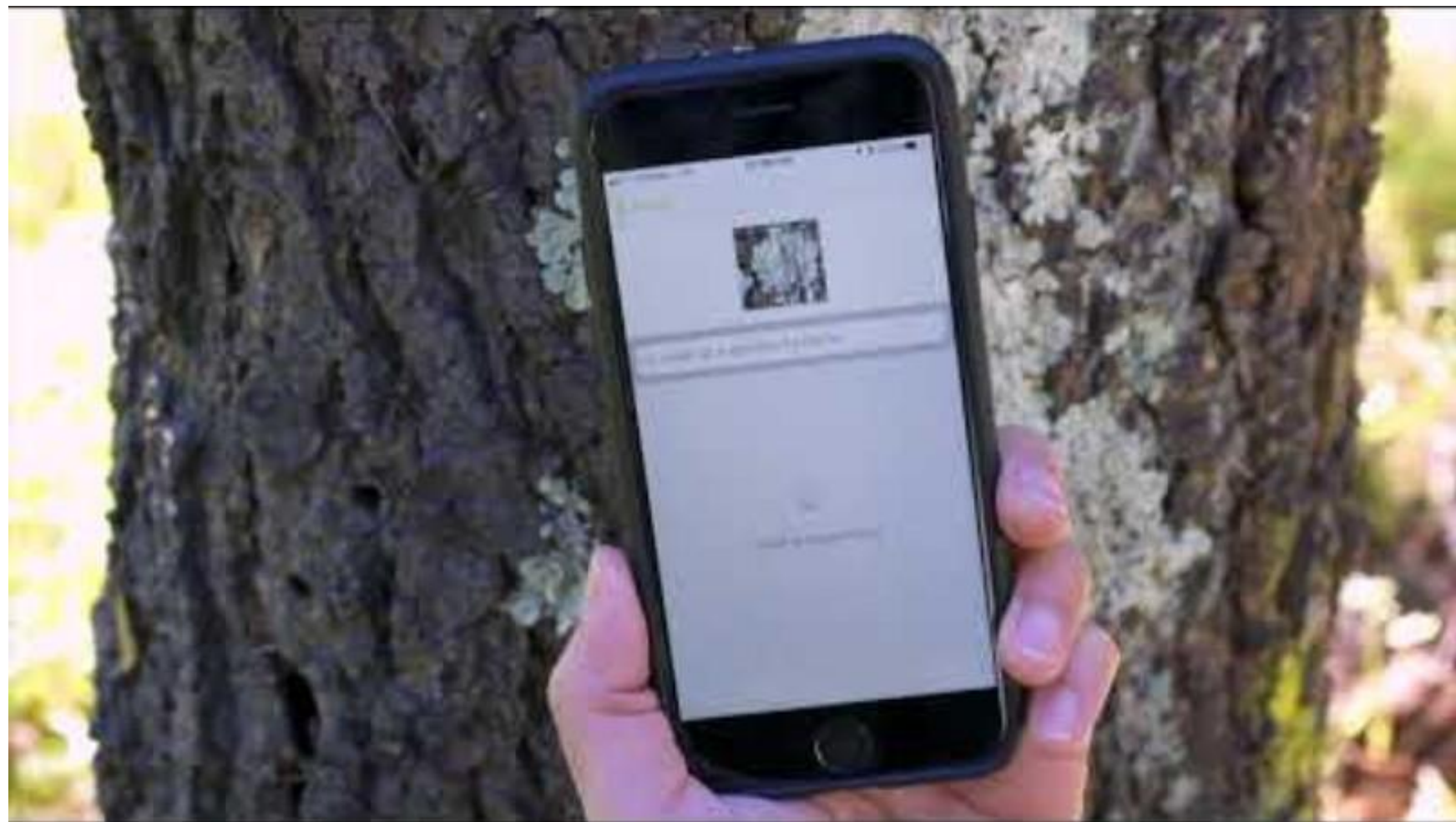
a social network of people
sharing their nature
observations

a platform for science

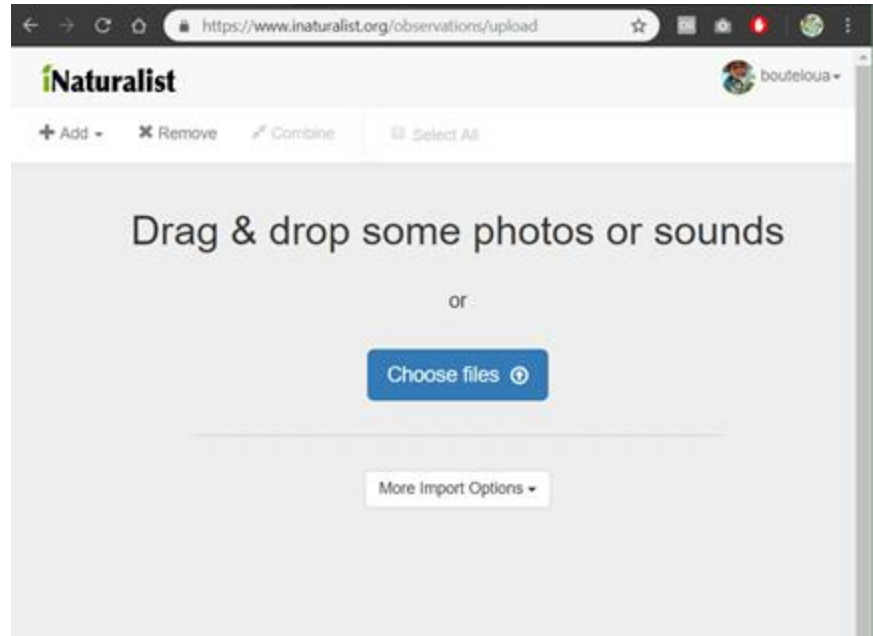
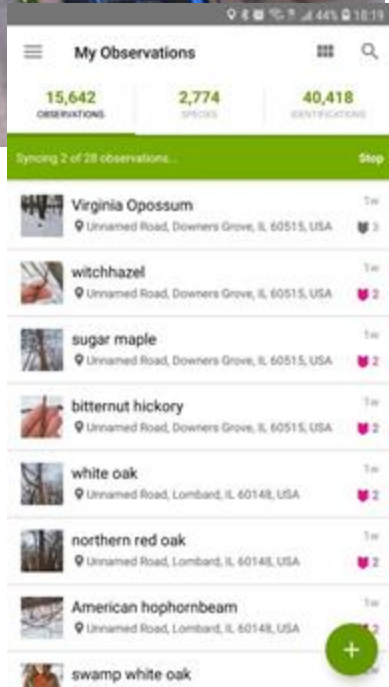
a map and database
of the world's
biodiversity

An observation records an encounter with an individual organism at a particular time and location.





Explore, Document, Share, Identify, Discuss



Identify, Discuss, Network, Socialize!

you



the iNaturalist community

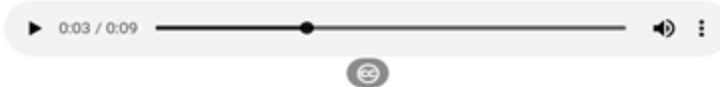
“computer vision” (automated image recognition tool)



Black Swallowtail (*Papilio polyxenes*) Research Grade



Neotibicen pruinosus (Scissors Grinder Cicada) Needs ID



Perisoreus canadensis (Canada Jay) Casual



No Photo

**no video
yet :(**

Evidence of organisms



iNaturalist App vs. Website

I use the app to...

- Make observations
- View observations near me while traveling

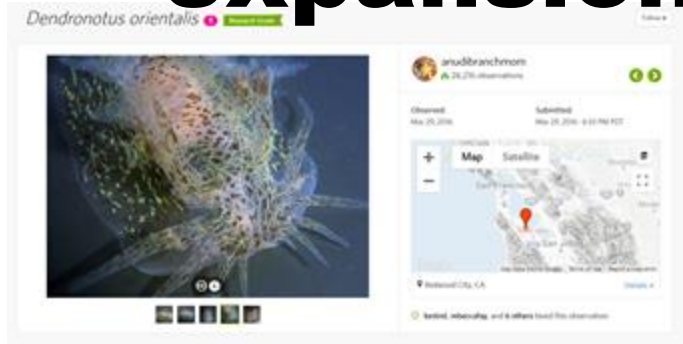
I use the website to...

do everything else

- Upload observations from camera
- Add/refine identifications
- Add IDs, comment, fave other users' observations
- Create and manage projects
- Write journal and project posts
- View taxon pages
- View stats
- Find local or taxonomic experts
- Export data



Range expansions



Invasive species



New species



Phenology



One of Many Community Science Projects in Our Region

Arboreal

eBird

BudBurst

Plants of Concern

Chicago Piping Plover Monitors

Bird Conservation Network Surveys

Project MartinWatch

Calling Frog Survey

Illinois Butterfly Monitoring Network

Illinois Odonate Survey

Acoustic Bat Monitoring

Rapid Floristic Quality Assessment

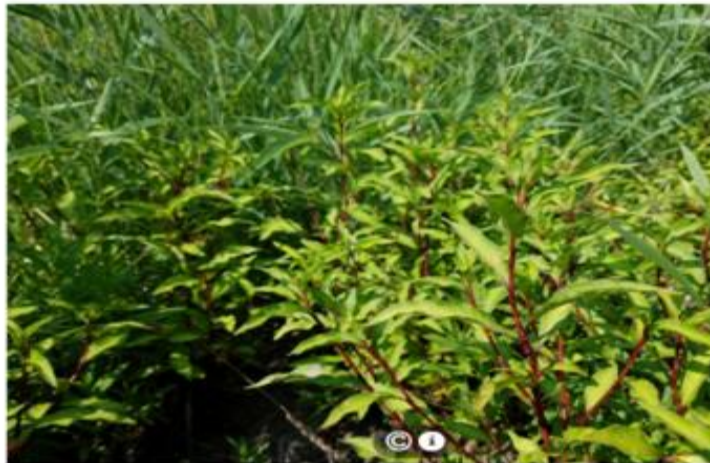
more @ chicagoparkdistrict.com/community-science

+ scistarter.org

- Engage the public in learning about plants and animals in the parks and their neighborhoods
- Create biodiversity data to help park staff & researchers understand our city
- Monitor rare, threatened, endangered species
- Track invasive species
- Direct conservation efforts



Discuss



bouteloua-suggested-an-ID

ID Withdrawn ty



Genus *Persicaria*

Knotweeds, Smartweeds, and Bistorts

@danielatha do you have tips for non-flowering *Persicaria punctata*/*hydropiper*/*robustior*?



danielatha suggested an ID

Improving ty



Persicaria hydropiper

Waterpepper

Compare

Hi Cassi,

I'm glad you are interested in *Persicaria*. They are some of my favorite plants. Partly because they vex botanists so much. ha ha. Me included!!

These are three with peppery tasting leaves. Here are some tips for individual species.

Persicaria hydropiper - Annual; stems red, usually un-branched; swollen nodes; ocreae with axillary shoots and often cleistogamous flowers; leaves peppery tasting. This species is said to be non-native in North America, but I believe it is native.

Persicaria punctata - Annual; stems green, usually branched; nodes barely swollen; ocreae with or without axillary shoots, but lower ocreae without cleistogamous flowers; leaves peppery tasting.



Persicaria robustior - Perennial; otherwise like *Persicaria punctata*, but with long, submerged rhizomes; larger leaves and more crowded inflorescences. Leaves super peppery tasting-- so hot it burns way more than the other two. I have only ever seen it in standing water of


How to get identifications on your observations





1. Make sure the observation has a date, location, photo/sound
2. Try to get the photos/sounds needed to identify this group of organisms
3. Add your own ID at the narrowest level you feel comfortable with, for example “plants” or “beetles”. Observations with an ID are much more likely to be identified
4. Wait. IDs sometimes just take time
5. If you observed an animal track, scat, or feather, add an annotation indicating so. Some identifiers will search specifically for these types of evidence of presence
6. Engage with the iNat community by adding IDs for others
7. Find and @ mention users who may be able to identify your organism
8. Strengthen your own ID skills to improve your observations and share your knowledge with the community


Identify to the “finest” level you are confident







 **bouteloua** suggested an ID 4mo | 




 **Order Lepidoptera**
Butterflies and Moths


 **amzamz** suggested an ID  Improving  4mo | 

 **Superfamily Noctuoidea**
Owlet Moths and Allies

 **k8thegr8** suggested an ID  Improving 4mo | 

 **Tribe Arctiini**
Tiger Moths

 **thebals** suggested an ID  Leading 11h | 

 **Genus *Apantesis***
A member of Tribe Arctiini (Tiger Moths)

Help identify & confirm IDs

Identify

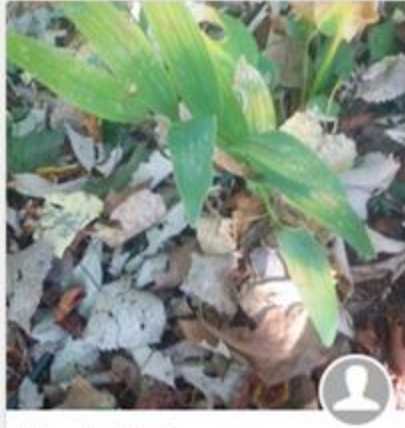
 Species  Filters **4** Reviewed



Genus *Rudbeckia*
Coneflowers and Black-eyed Susans



Genus *Quercus*
Oaks



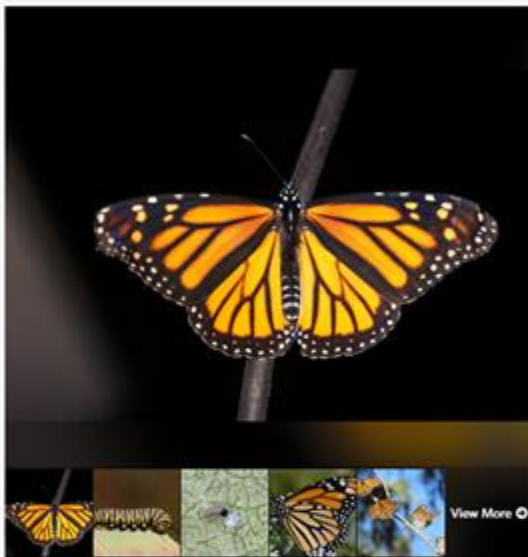
Kingdom Plantae
Plants



Genus *Prunus*
Plums, Cherries, and Allies

Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*)

Filter by Place



TOP OBSERVER



alexmor

Leaderboard 1,417

TOP IDENTIFIER



agulita

Leaderboard 64,852

LAST OBSERVATION



February 23, 2023

View Observation

TOTAL OBSERVATIONS



229,955

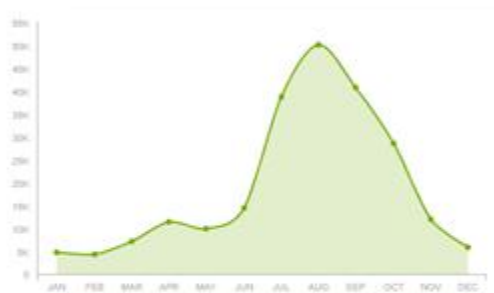
View All

Seasonality

History

Life Stage

Sex



Map

About

Taxonomy

Status

Similar Species

Other species commonly misidentified as this species



Viceroy

Limenitis archippus



Queen

Danaus gilippus



Southern Monarch

Danaus erippus



Gulf Fritillary

Dione vanillae



Painted Lady

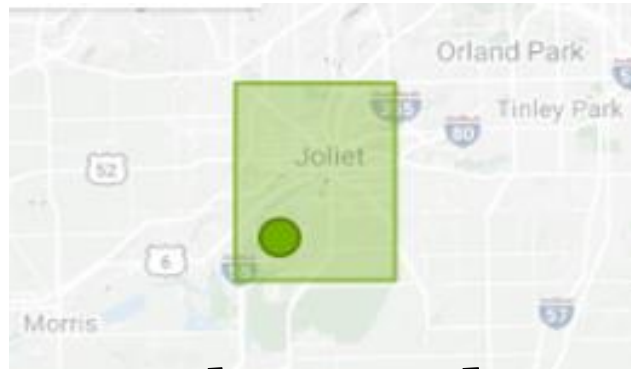
Vanessa cardui

Geoprivacy

- Location privacy
- Manual option - personal geoprivacy
- Automatic - “taxon geoprivacy” for at-risk species

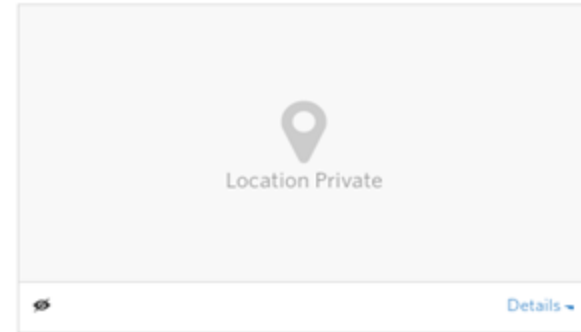


Open



Obscured


Random point within a
0.2 x 0.2 degree rectangle (~150 square
miles)



Private

iNaturalist (app and website)	Seek (app)
iNaturalist is an online community that allows you to share observations to discuss, identify, and create research-quality citizen science data for science and conservation.	Seek allows curious naturalists of all ages to earn badges and participate in challenges to observe organisms with on-screen identification using computer vision for identifications based on data from iNaturalist.
Best choice if you want to connect with others, share data, and are interested in natural history and contributing to citizen science	Best choice if you do not want to create an account or share data, or are just getting started exploring nature
Users must be 13 or older to make an account	No login or account required, kid-safe. Users aged 13+ or with parent's permission can optionally log in with their iNaturalist account and post observations to iNaturalist through Seek
iNaturalist's identification model provides initial suggestions, but other people in the iNaturalist community help you identify and confirm your observations	Seek's identification model provides an identification in real-time on screen
Records observations as biodiversity data that contribute to citizen science	This identification does not leave your device or require an internet connection to work
Photo, location, and time are recorded with each of your observations in the iNaturalist database	No personally identifiable information is collected from users who do not log in with their iNaturalist account



 CNC_Chicagoland

Observe: April 24 – 27

Identify: April 28 - May 10

Join the Chicagoland Project
on iNaturalist:



<https://bit.ly/cncchi2025>



View all Chicagoland Region events and
submit yours to us by April 1st:



<https://bit.ly/chiwildcnc>



Observation and ID Gathering



417 N Ashland Ave,
Chicago, IL 60622

districtbrewyards.com

Wednesday May 6th, 6PM

***Meet other organizers and
participants to ID observations
together in a fun social setting!***

***Too
far? Host yo
ur own in
your area!***

