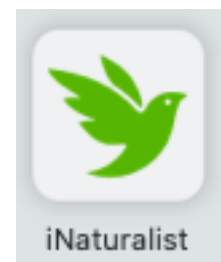


# Identifying Living Things using iNaturalist Australia with the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA)

GM 5.1a Friends of the North Coast Regional Botanic Garden October 2023



## Setting up iNaturalist on your PC and Phone

iNaturalist is a tool to identify all types of living things and to contribute observations to the Atlas of Living Australia as citizen scientists. This helps researchers understand more about living things. iNaturalist was originally developed by National Geographic (USA) and others to allow data sharing and to “help each other learn about nature”. In Australia it is linked to the Atlas of Living Australia maintained by the CSIRO, which greatly improves the accuracy of iNaturalist for the identification of Australian species. Observations uploaded to iNaturalist which are verified as ‘research grade’ are added to the ALA database. Over 95% of the 10 million verified records added to the ALA database in 2022-23 were from citizen scientists.

### To get started:

**STEP 1: Google “iNaturalist Australia”.** Bookmark the website on your PC. <https://inaturalist.ala.org.au>

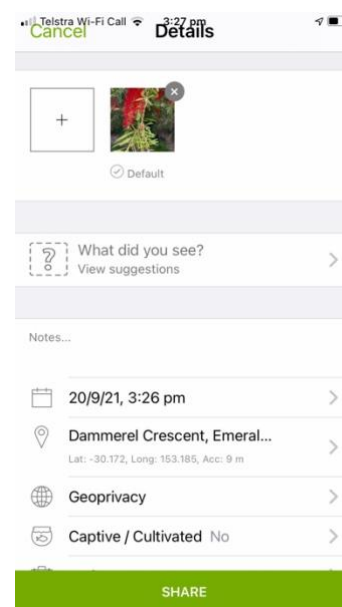
**STEP 2: Create a user account on iNaturalist** (A username, password and email)

**STEP 3: Download the iNaturalist app to your phone** (green bird logo) – Android or Apple

In the app set up, allow the iNaturalist app to use location services and to access the camera on your phone.

### Using iNaturalist in the Field with a Phone Camera

1. Open the iNaturalist app.
2. Press the camera symbol ‘**Observe**’
3. Press ‘**Camera**’ (this opens the phone camera)  
(Or upload a saved photo from the phone’s photo library)
4. **Take a photo** (see TIPS overpage)
5. Press “**Use Photo**” If not in focus, press ‘Retake’
6. The screen goes to the “**Details**” page (See screen shot right)  
A thumbnail of your photo appears at the top.  
The date, time and location is auto recorded with the photo.
7. **PRESS: “What did you see”** “View suggestions”  
Other photos can be added by pressing the box with + (at top)
8. **The screen changes to a list of possible species.**  
iNaturalist will say if it is confident...maybe only to Family or Genus level.
9. **Press on what you think is most likely from the suggestions list.**  
The family, genus, species name is now added to ‘what did you see’ box.
10. **Press the “SHARE”** green box at bottom of screen to upload.



### NOTES

- The geolocation of the photo with a smart phone allows iNaturalist to short list the species matching your photo to those recorded in this area as “seen nearby” and is also important for later identification.
- Next to the listed of suggested species is an ‘i’ which can be pressed to see records of images of that species to help compare. Return to the ‘Details’ page by pressing “back” at the top of screen.
- A number of photos of a living thing can be taken and stored on the phone’s photo gallery and then some selected photos uploaded to the iNaturalist app later. (See tips overpage on why this is useful)
- After an observation is uploaded, others on iNaturalist, including experts in some taxa, can correct, refine or verify the ID. You can decide to change your provisional ID based on suggestions by others.

Your observations with photos are stored under your username on iNaturalist, and is a handy reference.

The more you explore and have a go at identifying living things, the more you learn!

## TIPS on taking photos in the field using iNaturalist

- TAKE A NUMBER OF PHOTOS - from different angles. More photos/angles will aid identification.
- It is OK to have your hand or fingers in the photo to give scale to the living thing. (or use a small ruler)
- FOR PLANTS: 1. The leaf shape and arrangement on a stem. 2. Both sides of a leaf close up (hold the stem and turn a leaf over so both sides are in the one photo). 3. The flower or fruit when possible and for flowers – the underside as well. 4. The whole plant - is it a tree, a shrub, ground cover, vine? 5. Bark
- FOR ANIMALS: (especially birds, reptiles) a camera with a telephoto or zoom lens is usually needed with the images uploaded to your PC later. Record the location of the photo to enter manually on the iNaturalist map OR use the Geotag Photos Pro app - with the camera clock synced with your phone.
- Use a light source or flash where needed - more light gives more detail and sharpness of image.
- Date and time of the photo is usually in the metadata of a camera photo file which iNaturalist will import.
- Record other observations – habitat type (heathland, forest other...?), behaviour, interactions with other species. Eg: which plants were the birds feeding on? These can added in notes on iNaturalist.

If iNaturalist is unsure of the ID, just enter the Order, Family, Genus and upload to do more research later. Or wait and others in the online iNaturalist community may suggest an ID for you! For more help with iNaturalist features, use the help and tutorials under the “More” tab on the iNaturalist website.

## Exploring observations on iNaturalist and ALA to make a local species list

Before a field trip, explore the iNaturalist or ALA maps in your target location to see what lives where.

**On iNaturalist:** Click “Explore” then enter your location. Zoom in or move the map to your locality.

**TIP:** when zooming in or moving the map around, click “Redo search in map” (orange) for a revised list of species for this new map area. Observations listed as “Research Grade” have been verified by others.

**On the ALA:** Under “Search and Analyse” click “Explore Your Area”. (See separate intro guide for details.)

## Example of iNaturalist ‘Explore’ map of botanic garden and surrounds

Observations shown as pins: green (plants) blue (vertebrates) red (invertebrates). Clicking on a pin will open the record of that observation. Thumbnail photos with species name and location are listed to the right.

The screenshot displays the iNaturalist 'Explore' interface for Coffs Harbour NSW, Australia. At the top, the iNaturalist logo and navigation tabs (Explore, Your Observations, Community, Identify, More) are visible. Below the navigation, the word 'Observations' is prominently displayed. A search bar for 'Species' and a location filter for 'Coffs Harbour NSW, Australia' are present. The main map area shows a dense cluster of colored pins (green, blue, red) representing observations. A 'Custom Boundary' box is highlighted on the map. To the right of the map, a sidebar lists several species with their names, scientific names, locations, and dates. The species listed are: Rainbow Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus maluccanus*), Climbing Guinea Flower (*Hibbertia scandens*), Leafcurling Sac Spiders (Genus *Clubiona*), and Smooth Davidson's Plum (*Davidsonia johnsonii*).