



2020 St. Louis City Nature Challenge

Started in 2016 as a competition between San Francisco and Los Angeles, the City Nature Challenge (CNC) has grown into an international event, motivating people around the world to find and document wildlife in their cities. Run by the California Academy of Sciences and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles, the CNC is an annual four-day bioblitz-style competition at the end of April, where cities are in a friendly contest against each other to see which one can gather the most observations of nature, find the most species, and engage the most people in the event. In addition to the St. Louis Metro area, over 250 cities are signed up to participate in the 2020 City Nature Challenge. From Friday, April 24 to Monday, April 27, participants can upload their observations to the iNaturalist app, with identifications happening from Tuesday, April 28 to Sunday, May 3.

2020 City Nature Challenge and COVID-19

We know COVID-19 will significantly impact our 2020 City Nature Challenge project. After much thinking, we have decided to keep the City Nature Challenge event scheduled for April 24-27 (observations) and April 28-May 3 (identifications). However, we will be making some significant modifications- **This year's City Nature Challenge is no longer a competition.**

We want to embrace the collaborative aspect of sharing observations online with a digital community, and celebrate the healing power of nature as people document their local biodiversity to the best of their ability. We want people around the world to have the opportunity to participate, while still following all federal and local recommendations to keep communities safe.

As a participant, it is up to you how much or how little you take part! Do only what feels safe for you & your family. It is imperative that you follow all government regulations, though. Here in the St. Louis Area, we realize that in-person events are not going to happen, but since we're still allowed to go outside, let's try to enjoy & document nature in whatever ways we feel we can. Being outside can also help to lower stress levels and increase overall feelings of well-being, so take care of yourselves by being in nature if you're able to.

Stay safe, hang in there, and we can't wait to see what you find - in your houses, in your backyards, along sidewalks - and know that people all around the world are joining you in documenting nature in whatever way they can during these uncertain times.

How can you participate in the 2020 City Nature Challenge?

- Make observations on iNaturalist wherever you can.
- To make an observation, download the iNaturalist app and make an account. Take photos of wild plants and animals to make observations. If you know that what you're photographing is not wild, mark it as captive/cultivated. Upload your observations to share with the iNaturalist community.
- Once the City Nature Challenge starts, [help us identify what's being found in the St. Louis Region!](#) Go through the observations that have already been made in the St. Louis Area, but aren't Research Grade yet. In order to make these observations Research Grade, [we need citizen scientists to help us confirm these identifications.](#)
- Check out the resources on the [St. Louis City Nature Challenge Website.](#)
- Like us on [Facebook](#) and mark yourself as "going" on the [2020 City Nature Challenge Facebook Event.](#)

What can you do in your backyard?

- Put up bird feeders or moth lights, or put down cover boards to bring nature to you!
- What are the wild plants growing in your backyard?
- What insects or other creatures are using the cultivated plants in your backyard as habitat or a food source?

Helping with Identifications for the City Nature Challenge

Another thing you can do from your house is helping to make identifications during the City Nature Challenge. Once the observation portion of the challenge has ended, we will need help identifying those observations! In the same way that anyone can be an observer, anyone can help identify observations.

In iNaturalist, go to the [2020 St. Louis City Nature Challenge project](#), click "Observations" and you'll see an "Identify" button pop up just below it. Clicking this will take you to the iNaturalist Identify page and show you all of your city's observations that still need to be identified. From this page, you can restrict what it shows you by taxon, which helps if you know how to ID certain groups. If you're not an expert in any group, you can still help by identifying the "unknowns" – the observations with no IDs at all! Click the "Filters" button and then select the dashed-line leaf with a question mark in it. [Here's a short video about using the Identify page.](#)

No matter what, please only add an ID of which you can be reasonably sure - it's fine if you don't know what something is, and it's fine to only add a genus or family or even kingdom level ID.