

Lesson plan: Exploring nature with iNaturalist

Lesson Objective: Use simple secondary sources to find answers

Recommended Resources

- Nature Book or ID guide
- [Zoom In Video](#)
- [Biodiversity Bingo](#) film
- [Biodiversity Bingo](#) cards
- Magnifiers/magnifying lens
- ID cards if available
- Tubs, bug pots
- 'A guide for observing nature' (see resources)
- iPads loaded with the iNaturalist app (refer to notes for log in details)

Adult Support

- Support pupils in understanding the words 'cultivated' and 'captive' for use throughout activity 2
- Hand out and collect all equipment
- Working with groups supporting activity 2

Follow up activities

- This activity would work well as part of scientific investigation about habitats
- Explore Sustainable Learning [resources](#) about habitats for KS1

Duration
90 mins

Theme
Nature

Subject focus
Science

Age group
Key Stage 1

Learning outcomes (differentiated)

MUST Use careful observation skills to look closely at living things

SHOULD Check the app has made the correct identification

COULD Broaden identification skills with the help of the app

This lesson has been written to celebrate City Nature Challenge taking place on the 30th April – 3rd May. Over 400+ cities will be working together globally to collect as many wildlife observations as possible and engage the most people possible. For more information visit www.citynaturechallenge.org

In preparation for this lesson share with your class the app iNaturalist, which they will be using for activity 2 in the school grounds. You will need to set up a class account to keep student identities anonymous ([see online guidance](#)). Explain how the app is used and how they can explore the app themselves at home (see supporting resources).

Keywords
Naturalist
Characteristics
Appearance
Behaviour
Observe

Starter

Start by showing your class a nature book or ID guide and ask them its purpose. How do you think the people who wrote this book/guide found out about the plants or animals in it? Introduce your class to the term 'Naturalist' and its definition.

"A naturalist is a person who studies plants, animals, insects and other living things" - Collins Dictionary

Draw answers from the class to bring about discussion regarding how these naturalists knew about the animals/plants: their characteristics, behaviours and appearances. Help the class to understand that all of this information would have been gathered through close observations.

Give pupils one minute to study the person sitting next to them and find something that they have never noticed before, for example a new freckle.

Challenge your class to follow in these naturalists' footsteps and take part in their own observations of nature.

Share the video '[Zoom In](#)' and encourage pupils to use their senses to closely observe their environment.

Main activity

Activity 1

Explain to your class that you will be exploring the biodiversity of your school grounds (or park or local green space) and sharing the information with people from all around the world (just like a professional naturalist would).

Introduce the concept of biodiversity and the first activity '[Biodiversity Bingo](#)' using the film. Share the bingo cards with the pupils so they can familiarise themselves with all of the items and discuss any that they may not be familiar with.

Prepare your class to go outside and share the resource: 'A guide to observing nature'.

Pupils take part in Biodiversity Bingo (allow 15 minutes) with winners finding five in a row. Feedback to the rest of the class how easy they found the bingo, what were the most common and easiest to find and why?

Activity 2

Remind your class about how to use the app and share 'How to use iNaturalist'. In particular explain the words 'cultivated' and 'captive' as discussed on the guide. Adult support will be needed to reinforce this as the concept is a challenging one.

Hand out iPads and ID guides with the iNaturalist app. Divide up your school grounds and assign a group to work in each area with an adult.

Working in groups pupils explore their area of the school grounds and take photographs of each natural thing that they see (plants and animals) as part of the app. Any animals that cannot be photographed can be identified with ID guides and name inputted into the app.

Refer to app guides on using the app for recording data.

Call everyone together and collect in all the equipment. Ask groups to feedback to the class. For example, what did you find the most of, what was the most common plant or animal, what was the hardest to photograph, what did they enjoy most about using the app.

Plenary

How does it feel being a naturalist and observing things closely? Did they enjoy being part of an international programme?

Extension tasks

- Visit iNaturalist website www.inaturalist.org and explore the observations made around the world, the species recorded and the people taking part.

Curriculum links

Science Key Stage 1

- Observing closely, using simple equipment
- Identifying and classifying
- Gathering and recording data to help in answering questions.
- They should ask people questions and use simple secondary sources to find answer (non statutory)