

Organising a Guided Nature Walk Using iNaturalist to Record Wildlife

Running a [BioBlitz](#) can seem daunting. A shorter, more achievable alternative may be to organise a guided walk locally to you, with the aim of showing people how to record wildlife using the iNaturalist app. This will give people the skills to turn their wildlife observations into official wildlife records, which can be used to help scientific research, as well as informing conservation practice, local planning, and land management.

This document has been written as a guide to support you when organising a small, guided walk, and the main points you should consider. We think that guided walks work best for groups of 5-30 people.

You do not necessarily need to be a wildlife expert to do this, however a bit of knowledge about the local wildlife and good communication skills would be very useful.

PLANNING

- Decide on your **audience**; is your guided walk aimed at families, students, photographers, or another group? This will influence your route, and length of your walk, and where you advertise.
- Decide on your **theme**: Is there anything you want to focus on recording, for example plants, or invertebrates?
- Decide **who will be leading** the walk: You might want to lead the walk yourself, or you may want to contact/book a local expert, who can lead, answer questions, teach specialist knowledge, and share information to attendees.
- Decide who will be **supporting** the event: it's a good idea to have volunteers or staff who will be able to assist attendees with using iNaturalist (so encourage them to practice first!). You will want to have a designated first-aider with relevant training in the event of an emergency.
- Decide where to **advertise** your event, and how people sign up: this could be through a Facebook group, a booking through an Eventbrite page, local newsletters, or a poster that includes an email address for people to confirm their attendance.
- Consider **risks** and accessibility; this may involve filling in [a risk assessment](#) for the day or making sure your walk can be attended by your target audience.

ON THE DAY

- Introductions - introduce what the walk is for and what the group will do. Share route that will be walked, and species to look for.
- Share **risks** to be aware of, such as sun/heat/uneven ground/poisonous plants, etc.
- Go thorough **how to download iNaturalist**, and how to **make an observation** on the app (have some of these [guides to share on the day](#)).
- Walk slowly, giving people **time to ask questions**, resolving any issues with the app that may be encountered along the way.
- **Finish the session with a summary/plenary**. Go over what you've done, what you've found.
- **Suggest things to do next**; this could be visit other sites, suggest a website that shows where to find future events, or ways to continue the activity at home.

THINGS TO REMEMBER IF LEADING THE WALK

- The key to a good BioBlitz is enthusiasm, passion, and interest. This will rub off on to others taking part, so have fun and enjoy yourself!
- Be inclusive; ask open-ended questions.
- Never assume knowledge or skills - participants may have never been to this green space before. Some may not know what a horse chestnut or a stinging nettle is, or only know it in their own language.
- Make sure the language that you use is suitable for your audience. If Latin names are used, make sure they are used in context and explained.
- The public may perceive you as an expert! They will be interested in what you do, how you got to be there, and want to ask you questions. It's okay to not know all the answers!
- You may want to consider evaluating the walk, to know how to make improvements for future events. This might involve a survey or collecting feedback from attendees.