



# Using iNaturalist

If you are new to recording, this is the app to get you started. Really useful if you are not confident of your identification skills or want something that is relatively quick and easy to use. Please do note that Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre does not directly extract data from iNaturalist: as iNaturalist 'Research Grade' data eventually feed into iRecord data, we extract only from iRecord to avoid data duplication. If you want CBDC to pick up your data as quickly as possible, we suggest using another approach such as sending your observations directly to us or using iRecord but please do remember to only record once!

Find out more about iNaturalist: [A Community for Naturalists · iNaturalist](#) (this link will take you to the iNaturalist website)

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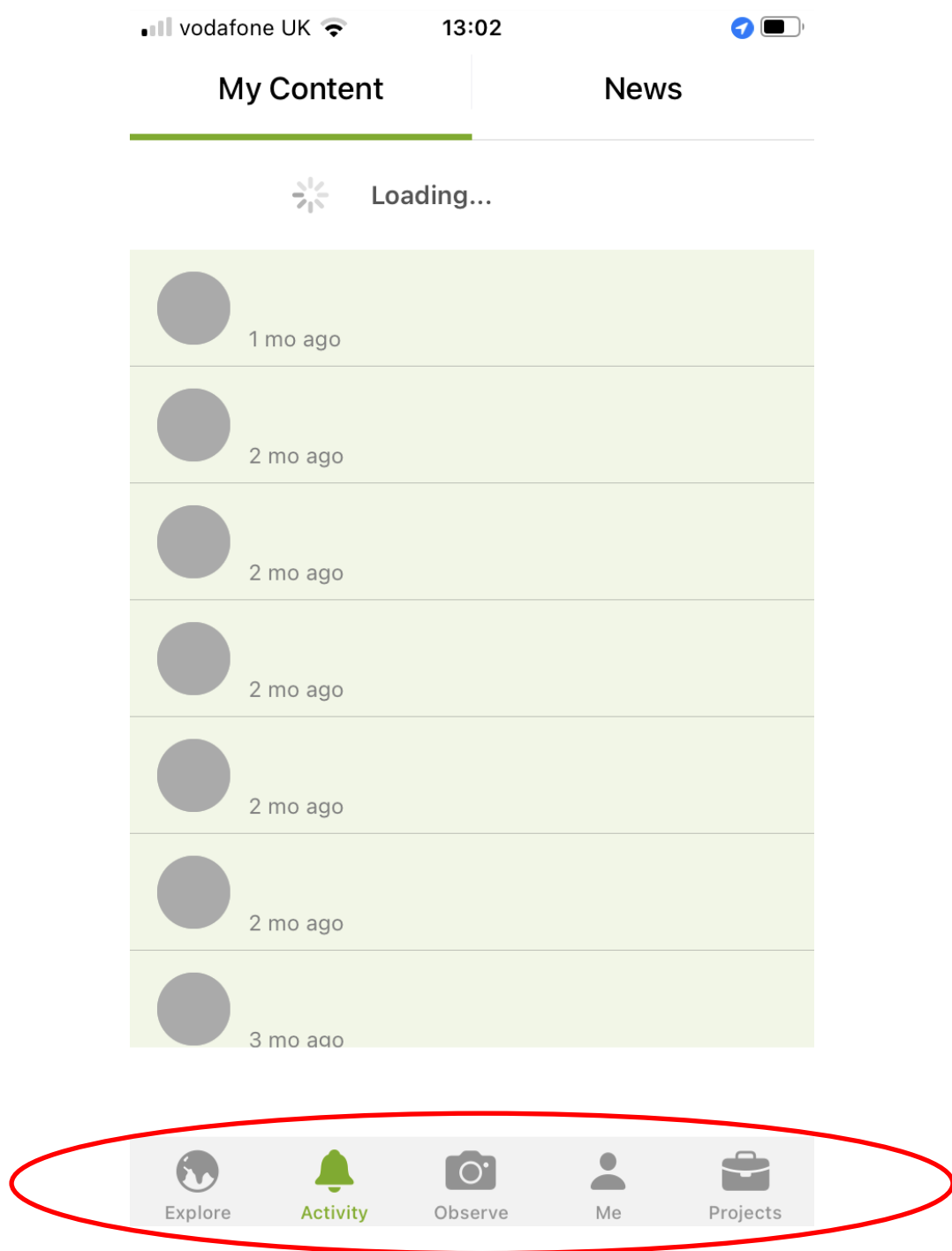
## How to use iNaturalist for recording wildlife

- Firstly, create an account with iNaturalist. This is free to do and can be done on a computer, tablet or phone (download the iNaturalist app for your preferred app store). See instructions for how to do this in the 'Recording Apps – how to create an account' help document.
- The app and the website differ slightly in how they operate so separate guidance is provided for both, with an emphasis on using the app (on phone or tablet).
- It is important that if using a mobile device (phone or tablet) in particular, you should switch on your location to allow the app to access where you are. This is usually found in Settings>Privacy &/ Security. It is possible to use the app without location but this will make recording very difficult!

## Using the iNaturalist app (on phone or tablet):

The app is excellent for individuals to start recording. The option to use images from your photo library also means you don't have to use your mobile data or search for an elusive mobile signal while in the field! The app is immediate – even if you download images later – and simple to use. It is not so useful for group use (e.g. one person capturing records on behalf of a group or use by a school group) when we would recommend considering using the website option described below. This is because a key

criterion for biological records is recording the name of the observer/recorder which is lost when one person is recording for several people.



Once logged in, you will have five options at the bottom of the screen (ringed in red above):

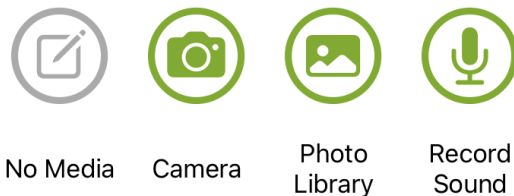
- Explore – will allow you to explore nearby records on a map or via a list.
- Activity – will usually show you ‘My Content’ which lists your records and observations, and any verification suggestions that other iNaturalist users have made on your observations.
- Observe – allows you to create a record with no media or with media (directly via your camera or, if you have already taken the picture, by accessing your photo library). You can also record sound!
- Me – a list of your observations

- Projects – any projects you have joined. This might be your school or other community group. We would also recommend joining ‘Lakeland Fauna and Flora’ which is the CBDC project to capture all Cumbrian biodiversity records submitted to iNaturalist for Cumbria.

The most important option is ‘Observe’ as this will allow you to make and submit an observation while ‘Me’ will keep a record of your submissions.

#### To submit an observation:

- Click ‘Observe’
- Select whether you will be submitting with or without media.

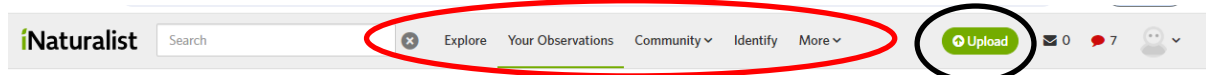


- If media:
  - o You can select ‘Camera’ to take the photograph immediately or ‘Photo Library’ if you want to submit something you photographed earlier.
  - o Select/take the image and tap ‘Add’ to create the record. A new record will be created with the image appearing at the top of the record.
  - o Tap ‘What did you see?’ to add the name of the animal, plant or fungus observed as either common name or scientific name. If you don’t know and need help to ID, let the app make suggestions by waiting a few seconds for the AI to evaluate the image. Do review the suggestions as the AI is still learning and the first suggestion might not be the most appropriate (e.g. it might suggest an American species). If in doubt, select at genus rather than species level.
  - o If you are happy with the suggestion, select it and return to the record details screen to complete the rest of the record.
  - o Check the date and location – both should automatically detect these from the settings on your device and then ‘Save’.
  - o You have submitted a record!
  - o Double check in ‘Me’ to ensure your record has been uploaded to iNaturalist: if there is a green upload symbol next to your record, tap it to upload. Once uploaded, the green symbol will disappear.
- If no media:
  - o Tap ‘What did you see?’ and type in the name of what you saw, then select ‘Done’.
  - o The AI check will not be available so you will need to be confident of your observation!
  - o Check the date and location – both should automatically detect these from the settings on your device and then ‘Save’.
  - o You have submitted a record!
  - o Double check in ‘Me’ to ensure your record has been uploaded to iNaturalist: if there is a green upload symbol next to your record, tap it to upload. Once uploaded, the green symbol will disappear.

If you wish to delete an observation, return to your list in ‘Me’, select the observation you wish to delete, click edit and scroll down the record to the bottom to select ‘delete observation’.

## Using the iNaturalist website/browser:

If one person is recording on behalf of a group, particularly in the case of school groups, we would suggest the use of the iNaturalist website via a browser (e.g. Chrome, Edge, Firefox). Different approaches can then be used to collect the data – from pen and pencil to cameras and devices not connected to the internet – which could be helpful when access and safeguarding could be issues. When back in the classroom or office, these individual records can then be uploaded, ideally using different iNaturalist profiles to ensure that records can be linked to a particular observer.



Once logged in, there are a number of options in the top tool bar (ringed in red above):

- Explore – will allow you to explore nearby records on a map or via a list.
- Your Observations – a list of your observations
- Community – a drop box of options to find other recorders, projects and more. We would recommend joining 'Lakeland Fauna and Flora' which is the CBDC project to capture all Cumbrian biodiversity records submitted to iNaturalist for Cumbria but even if you don't, your records will still be submitted!
- Identify – allows you to review observations made by anyone across the world
- More – lots of other information and resources

## To submit an observation or even a group of observations:

- Click on the green upload button in the top tool bar (ringed in black above).
- Then either drag and drop a photo, choose a file by clicking the blue button or click 'Add' in the top left if adding an observation without media. There are other import options available too. Useful if records have been collected across multiple devices which can be plugged into the desktop/laptop.
- In the new window, add relevant information if not imported with the photo such as date and location.
- Suggest a species name or wait for the AI to make suggestions for you to select. North American species are often suggested first so do check if the suggestions aren't clear. If in any doubt, select a higher taxon group such as genus or even family.
- There are other options to explore in 'Tags', 'Projects' etc. but these aren't necessary for a simple record and many projects are set to pick up your observation any way. Just remember the four W's – what, where, when and who (the profile is important!).
- Click the green submit button at top right.
- Repeat for new observations.

## Verification

When you have submitted an observation, the resulting record will be listed as 'Needs ID'. If verified by the iNaturalist community as being correct, the record becomes 'Research Grade'. If the community cannot agree on an identification or flag another issue with the record, it will become a 'Casual' record. All records will still be visible in your list, in projects (depending on settings adopted in these projects) and in the general exploration fields. The different classifications of the records impact how the records are used more widely but do not lead to the loss of records in iNaturalist. For instance, only 'Research Grade' records will be submitted to national and local records centres.

## Projects

Projects are set up to capture records specific to a geographic area, a particular time interval or for a particular taxon group. Examples include the grounds of a school or nature reserve, or a recording event such as an annual weekend bioblitz, or to collect records about a particular group of plants or animals e.g. swifts in Cumbria. Most records will be submitted automatically to these projects – you will not have to take any action. Some projects are closed groups and will only accept records from individuals who have joined the closed group but you can generally apply to join such groups and when you have, your records will be sent to them automatically.

CBDC can help you set up a project so do get in touch if you would like us to assist you. You can also set up your own project but generally need to have made 50 observations in iNaturalist before you can create a project. There is plenty of guidance on how to do this provided on the iNaturalist website if you have the time – or ask CBDC!

## Problems with iNaturalist

The iNaturalist community provides considerable support to users but please do contact CBDC if you have a query you are struggling to solve.

## Will my records be used by Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre?

Yes! However, there are some key considerations which will impact on whether we can use your records:

1. iNaturalist uses [Creative Commons licences](#) which, by default, are set for non-commercial use. CBDC is a commercial operation (we need to fund our activity) so unless you alter your licence setting, we will NOT be able to use your records. To find out how to do this, please go to the document 'Changing your iNaturalist Licence'. It should only take you two minutes but will ensure we can use your records for informing decision making across Cumbria.
2. We don't extract data directly from iNaturalist but wait for it to feed into iRecord. This happens automatically when your record becomes 'Research Grade'. You don't need to do anything for this to happen. If you are struggling to get your observations uplifted to 'Research Grade', you will probably need to provide more information, particularly a good quality photograph!

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