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CITY NATURE CHALLENGE IS ORGANIZED BY



NHMLAC INVITES COMMUNITY SCIENTISTS ACROSS THE GLOBE TO SAFELY PARTICIPATE IN THE CITY NATURE CHALLENGE APRIL 24-27, 2020

5th annual challenge offers an opportunity for people to connect with nature and participate in a collective scientific effort, while safely adhering to public health parameters from home



A mantis is spotted blending in well with a plant. Insects can be found outdoors—and indoors in the nooks and crannies of homes. Courtesy of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

Los Angeles, CA (April 14, 2020) – The fifth annual [City Nature Challenge](#) is set to take place in cities throughout the world from Friday, April 24 to Monday, April 27. The global event, co-organized by the Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County and San Francisco’s California Academy of Sciences, calls on current and aspiring community scientists, nature and science fans, and people of all ages and backgrounds to observe and submit pictures of wild plants, animals, and fungi using the free mobile app [iNaturalist](#) (note a few cities are using other platforms). From April 24 to April 27, participants can upload their observations to the app. From Tuesday, April 28 to Sunday, May 3 scientists will sort and identify submissions. Final results will be announced on Monday, May 4.

In response to public health and safety requirements related to COVID-19, this year’s City Nature Challenge will no longer be a competition. Instead, participants are encouraged to embrace the collaborative aspect of sharing observations online with a digital community and celebrate the

healing power of nature safely from home, with careful physical distancing, as they document local biodiversity to the best of their ability within new public safety parameters. It is imperative that participants closely follow public health guidelines as they are updated in real-time in response to COVID-19, including “stay at home” orders in many regions. For detailed information about how the City Nature Challenge is adapting to COVID-19, visit citynaturechallenge.org/COVID19.

“It’s important to be physically distant, but socially engaged. While many must remain home at this time—our parks and public places closed—we can participate safely, right outside of our homes and connected digitally through iNaturalist and online,” said Dr. Lori Bettison-Varga, president and executive director at the Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County. “The City Nature Challenge started as a seed of an idea that has grown exponentially each year; it is proof of how passionate people are about connecting with nature and one another as part of a collective effort. I encourage all nature and culture fans to join us, practicing physical distancing, in this opportunity to boost spirits, wellness and environmental optimism for Earth Day’s 50th Anniversary.”

The Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County launched [NHMLAC Connects](#), a digital portal for nature and culture experiences, to continue science, collections and community learning through COVID-19 closure phases.

Nature exists in every city, and connecting scientists and the community through community/citizen science is proving to be one of the best ways to study it. As global human populations become increasingly concentrated in cities, it’s important to document urban biodiversity and help ensure the future health of plants and wildlife. Large pools of data built through [iNaturalist](#), from natural history museums and science organizations help authorities make informed conservation decisions that allow humans to coexist sustainably with the plants and animals in their neighborhoods.

Participation instructions are easy:

1. Find wildlife. It can be any wild plant, animal, fungi, slime mold, or any other evidence of life (scat, fur, tracks, shells, carcasses!) found in your neighborhood, home, backyard, or even through your windows. You might be surprised by how many insects thrive in the nooks and crannies around you.
2. Take pictures of what you find using [iNaturalist](#).
3. Learn more as your observations are identified.

If participants are not able to take photos of wildlife, they can focus their efforts on [identifying species documented in their area](#). A great way for people and organizations to make this a safe community event is to host a virtual identification party between April 28 – May 3.

The Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County and California Academy of Sciences launched the City Nature Challenge in 2016. The inaugural challenge invited participants from Los Angeles and San Francisco to observe and submit pictures of wildlife through iNaturalist. By the end of the inaugural weekend, over 1,000 participants submitted more than 20,000 observations of nature. From there, the Challenge continued annually with increasing participation each year.

In 2019, the City Nature Challenge tallied more than 950,000 observations made by over 35,000 people in over 150 participating cities in 30 countries. Participants in Miami spotted a swallow-tailed kite dropping an iguana in mid-air. In Bolivia, citizen scientists spotted an Andean condor—the largest flying bird in the world—circling high over their heads. And in Hong Kong, participants photographed the fluke of an endangered Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin. This influx of information gives scientists, educators, urban planners, and policymakers insight into the biodiversity of urban locales throughout the world.

NHMLAC City Nature Challenge Virtual Events

Introduction to iNaturalist Tuesday, April 14 at 1 pm

Celebrate Citizen Science Day by learning how to use iNaturalist to share your nature observations and participate in community science. This webinar will cover iNaturalist basics, how to take photos for science, and information about the upcoming City Nature Challenge. Register: <http://bit.ly/Intro2iNat>

Introduction to iNaturalist for Families Thursday, April 16 at 10:30 am

Learn how to use iNaturalist to share your observations of nature and participate in community science. This webinar will cover iNaturalist basics, how to take photos for science, information about the upcoming City Nature Challenge, and tips for families using iNaturalist with their children. Register: <http://bit.ly/iNatFam>

City Nature Challenge Virtual ID Party Thursday, April 30 at 7 pm

Join NHM staff & scientists in a virtual ID party where we will be identifying observations made during the City Nature Challenge and contribute to a global database of scientific research. No experience is necessary to participate. The event will include an introduction to iNaturalist's Identify Tool and tips for becoming a better identifier. Register: <http://bit.ly/CNCVirtualID>

More Information and Education Toolkit

Visit citynaturechallenge.org

iNaturalist

Signing up is easy and free. Visit inaturalist.org from your browser, or download iNaturalist from the [Apple App Store](#) or [Google Play](#) store.

Social Media

#CityNatureChallenge

Twitter handle: [@citnatchallenge](#)

About NHMLAC

The Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County (NHMLAC) include the Natural History Museum, La Brea Tar Pits, and the William S. Hart Museum. They operate under the collective vision to inspire wonder, discovery, and responsibility for our natural and cultural worlds. The museums hold one of the world's most extensive and valuable collections of natural and cultural history—more than 35 million objects. Using these collections for groundbreaking scientific and historic research, the museums also incorporate them into on- and offsite nature and culture exploration in L.A. neighborhoods, and a slate of community science programs—creating indoor-outdoor visitor experience that explore the past, present, and future. Visit nhmlac.org and nhmlac.org/connects to explore collections, science and community engagement experience digitally.