iNaturalist BioBlitz Challenge
Frequently Asked Questions

What is a BioBlitz?

A BioBlitz is a short-term focused effort by professional scientists, teachers, students, and citizen scientists working together to find and identify as many different species as possible within a defined landscape (i.e., National Wildlife Refuge, National Fish Hatchery).

What is iNaturalist?

iNaturalist is a citizen science and social network application designed to map and share species biodiversity observations across the globe. iNaturalist is similar in concept to the popular eBird application, but it allows users to record and share all biodiversity (plants and animals, large and small) and retains a photo or audio record of the observation. The iNaturalist App can help you identify a species from your photo, and other users can recommend identifications, hopefully reaching a consensus identification to species level.

What locations are eligible for the challenge?

All 130 Southeast Region (R4) National Wildlife Refuges and 12 National Fish Hatcheries are eligible to participate in the challenge. The challenge applies to observations made within the administrative boundaries of each respective refuge or hatchery. These observations can be made by anyone: staff, volunteer, citizen scientist, hobby naturalist, or novice explorer.

How can I participate?

Anyone can participate and contribute verified species observations that will be tracked by location on the "Leaderboard" and count towards the challenge among the Refuges and Hatcheries. Participants can include staff, interns, volunteers, Friends and the public. Each participating individual submits their own observations directly to iNaturalist, so Service staff will not need to manage their participation or submissions.

Observations can be made in the field to iNaturalist via the iNaturalist App using an Apple or Android Smartphone. The App can access your Smartphone's camera for easy documentation and georeferencing. Be certain in your Smartphone settings to allow photographs to be georeferenced from your camera. If you use a digital camera, observations and associated photos can be uploaded from your computer via your account on the iNaturalist website, but you'll need to provide GPS coordinates for the observation manually if your digital camera is not GPS-enabled. Photos must be of plants and animals "in situ" - they are not to be picked, held, or otherwise collected.

Do I have to join iNaturalist?

Yes. Observations made outside of iNaturalist will not be tallied. Sign up for free at https://www.iNaturalist.org. Each participant should create their own account. Though not required (see below), joining the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wildlife Refuge System and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Fish Hatchery System iNaturalist Projects will guarantee your observations count.

Do I have to join the USFWS iNaturalist Projects?
No, but it certainly makes it easier on you and guarantees your observations count in the challenge. If users choose not to join these projects, observations will be tallied only if users change the "Project settings" under their iNaturalist account to allow "Any" projects to add their observations.

What are the challenge categories?
Prizes will be awarded to the winning location in three categories:
Most species observations during the challenge window.
Most species observations NEW to the property during the challenge window.
Most unique users contributing at least 5 observations to the property during the challenge window.

What counts as a species?
For the purposes of this challenge, a "species" is an observation of an organism submitted to iNaturalist and identified by the iNaturalist community to at least the Genus level. This happens when at least 3 users make an identification on an observation, with > ⅔ in agreement on the identification.

What are the dates of the challenge?
The challenge window opens at 12:00 AM on 1 June, 2018, and closes at 11:59 PM on 30 November, 2018. This date range applies to the time of organism observation, not the time of observation upload into iNaturalist. Thus, observations observed prior to 1 June but uploaded during the challenge are not eligible. Note also that observations submitted after 11:59 PM on 30 November will not be tallied, even for observations occurring within the challenge window. We do still appreciate the observation though!

What is the prize?
The winning refuge or hatchery in each category will receive a Nikon CoolPix P900 digital camera system with a 24-2000 mm 35 mm equivalent focal length lens and built-in GPS to georeference images. A refuge or hatchery can win only in a single category. A refuge or hatchery winning in multiple categories will be awarded the prize in the category order presented above. For example, a refuge winning the "Most Species" and "Most New Species" categories will be awarded the prize for the "Most Species" category, and the runner-up in the "Most New Species" category will be awarded the prize for that category.

What is the etiquette established for participants?
Participants must follow all rules and regulations for each refuge or hatchery, available on site or internet. These are established for safety of the plants,

wildlife, staff and public, including designated areas or hours that are closed to the public. This is a photo verification bioblitz challenge, and all plants and animals must be photographed in situ – without handling or disturbance. This 'Wildlife First' approach ensures safety of the species you are documenting as well as your own, as wild plants and animals may bite or sting. Collect only a photo, and leave only richer for your experience.

Should I be concerned about providing location information for endangered, threatened, or sensitive species?
iNaturalist automatically obscures location information for (1) listed species, (2) any IUCN threatened species, and (3) species with a G1/G2 NatureServe ranking. As administrators of the NWRS and NFHS iNaturalist projects, we can also obscure publically-available location data for any additional species we feel are sensitive, while retaining the high quality location data for internal use in wildlife management decisions. If you find a record that you feel should be considered sensitive, with unobscured locational data, please bring it to the attention of the refuge or hatchery.

Who do I contact for help in iNaturalist?
If you have other questions about the challenge or need help getting your iNaturalist account and phone Apps to work, contact David Richardson or Adam Smith with the Inventory & Monitoring Branch.