April EcoQuest: Ten Year Anniversary of City Nature Challenge!

Striped coralroot, (*Corallorhiza striata*), **mylan**, some rights reserved, CC BY 4.0

Yellow-shafted × Red-shafted Flicker (*Colaptes auratus luteus × cafer*), **leslie_s**, some rights reserved, CC BY 4.0

Wolf spiders (Family Lycosidae), **mylan**, some rights reserved, CC BY 4.0

Let's celebrate Earth Day and our Front Range biodiversity by participating in the 10-year anniversary of the **City Nature Challenge**! This is a yearly event for folks in cities all over the world to observe and document biodiversity in their own backyards. Any living organism is fair game for observation – plants, mammals, birds, insects, fish – they all contribute to the City Nature Challenge. To participate, make observations of any organism on iNaturalist during the observation phase. An identification phase follows, where you can join a community of nerdy naturalists to identify the species observed. Learn more and **find local bioblitzes** near you.

The City Nature Challenge 2025
Observations: April 25 – April 28
Upload and Identification Phase: April 29 – May 4

For 2024's global challenge, there were almost 2.5 million observations of over 65,000 species made by 83,000+ people from over 500 cities in ~50 countries around the world. Almost 4,000 of those species are considered rare, endangered, or threatened.

In the Denver-Boulder metro area, last year we contributed more than 4,500 observations were observed by nearly 400 people of almost 1,000 species. Our most observed species was American plum (*Prunus americana*). Fun species observed included black bear (*Ursus americanus*), beaver (*Castor canadensis*), summer tanager (*Pirangra rubra*), snowy egret (*Egretta thrula*), great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*), and roundtip and Front Range twinpods (*Physaria vitulifera* and *P. bellii*). We even had 73 research-grade observations of 10 species that are listed as rare, endangered, or threatened by NatureServe or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This effort to observe biodiversity also enhanced our understanding of species distributions. For example, a graduate student at the University of Colorado, Denver found the first record of a parasitic orchid species (striped coralroot, *Corallorhiza striata*) at our own Chatfield Farms bioblitz!

It's easy to participate. Your iNaturalist observations will automatically be added to the **City Nature Challenge 2025 Denver-Boulder metro project** if they are made during the challenge event and occur in the greater metro area (see above link for map of included areas). Additionally, all plant and fungal observations will automatically be added to the **Denver EcoFlora Project**.

We can't wait to see what you discover this year!

What is an EcoQuest?
EcoQuests, part of the Denver EcoFlora project, challenge citizens to become citizen scientists and observe, study and conserve the native plants of the City via iNaturalist, an easy-to-use mobile app.

How Do I Get Started?
1. Download the iNaturalist app or register online at **iNaturalist.org**.
2. Take photos of the plants in bloom that you find on your daily neighborhood walk. It is ok if they are weeds! But avoid taking photos of cultivated plants in gardens or in your home.
3. If you are concerned about revealing the location of sensitive organisms or observations at your own house, you can hide the exact location from the public by changing the "geoprivacy" of the observation to "obscured."
4. Post your findings on iNaturalist via the app.
5. Your observations will automatically be added to the **Denver EcoFlora Project**.
6. You can add an identification to your photo when you post your findings on iNaturalist, or leave it blank for others to identify.

What is the Goal?
The EcoFlora project is designed to meaningfully connect citizens with biodiversity, and to assemble novel observations and data on the metro area's flora to better inform policy decisions and conservation strategies.

Photo by Scott Dressel-Martin