Camp Fire
MINNESOTA

My nature connection

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANT AND ANIMAL EXPLORATION

GRADES: 4+
TIME: 30-40 min

CURIOUS ABOUT THE WORLD AROUND YOU?

Help your students discover the amazing varieties of plants and animals that live in their backyards or around their neighborhoods!

iNaturalist is a program (available online and as smart phone app) that helps students identify plant and animal species that they are curious about.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

The smartphone app "iNaturalist" or any device that can access a webpage

A device that is able to take photos

Optional art materials: paper, pencils, markers, scissors

ACTIVITY

INTRODUCTION

In order to set up iNaturalist, students can download the smartphone app (available for both Apple and Android) or simply sign up by heading to https://www.inaturalist.org.

In order to create an account, students will use their emails and create a password. Students may walk around their backyards and neighborhoods to observe different plants, animals, or bugs. Once they find something (say, a plant) that they are curious about, they can snap a picture through the app or upload it onto their account on the website.

The iNaturalist app allows students to explore their interests and learn more about nature without disturbing it.

Students will:

1. Identify different species of plants and animals with the aid of the iNaturalist app
2. Research the species they have identified to learn more
3. Make nature-based scientific observations

SETTING
E-Learning
Outdoor
Activity

IDENTIFYING THE SPECIES

Once you have a photo, tap "What did you see?" and view the suggestions. If you are using the website, upload the photo and click "species name." The suggestions are based around the species that grow/ live in your area. Scroll through the options and see what you find!

If you are unsure, click the "i" for info to give you clues. Once you think you have your plant or animal identified, click share! Different people can see your observation and confirm the species or make a suggestion.

HOW TO USE iNATURALIST IN YOUR CLASSROOM

iNaturalist can be a great tool to compliment your distance learning lessons. Educators can create a "project" on iNaturalist and invite every student to join the group. That way your class will be able to share observations with each other and see what their classmates have discovered. See section 4 for detailed instructions on creating and joining an iNaturalist Project.

The program has a space for journal entries. You could ask your students to reflect on what they have observed, what species they learned about, or simply how it feels to explore outside.

You could encourage students to practice mindfulness as they spend time outdoors either by themselves or with family members.

Less Screen Time Option:
Students could pick a plant, animal or bug that they found and create an art project around it. Draw their observation and label it with the species they believe it is. Encourage students to present their projects and share their discoveries with their classmates.

SPARK YOUR STUDENTS' CURIOSITY- ENCOURAGE THEM TO ENJOY TIME IN NATURE

For Older Students:
Encourage students to do additional research on plant and animal species they have identified with the app and record their findings in a notebook or nature journal.

You could add additional prompts like:

"What other species is this related to?"
"What is the range of this species?"
"Is this species a generalist or specialist in its environment?"
"Is this species native or invasive?"

Step 1. (For Students and Educators): Create an account on iNaturalist
Log on to https://www.inaturalist.org/ and click "Sign Up" in the center of the page. For your email, use your assigned school email. For your username, use the first part of your school email address (the text that comes before the @). If the username is already taken add numbers (ex. 1234) after your name until you find an available username. For your password, use your school account password. Click "Create Account."

Step 2. (For Students): Send your teacher your account username over email
Email your teacher with the subject line reading "iNaturalist Username". In the body of your email include your iNaturalist username.

Step 3. (For Educators): Creating a Class Project
After you have received the usernames from your students, log on to your account on inaturalist.org. After you are logged in go to https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/new. On this page, scroll down to "Collection Projects" and click the green "Get Started Button." You will now be on the Project Details Page. Under "Project Name" type a name that will be easily found by your students (example: Jones 4th Grade Class). Add a brief summary in the box under Project Summary. If you are feeling creative, you can add images from "Project Icon" and "Project Banner." Next, scroll down to "Observation Requirements" and find the box under "Users." Type in each of your students' usernames and click on them to add each one to the group. Once all students have been added, scroll down to the bottom of the page and click the green "Done" button. Send an email to all of your students that contains the name of your iNaturalist project.

Step 4. (For Students): Joining your class' iNaturalist project
Log on to inaturalist.org using the account you created. At the top of the page search for the project name that your educator emailed to you. When it appears in the drop down menu, click on the "About" button next to the name. When you are brought to the project page, click the "Join" button on the right side of the page. You are now part of the class's iNaturalist project! Any observation you upload will be automatically added to this project.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

take a short survey at:
campfiremn.org/mynatureconnection

or here:
Kids Survey - click here
Teachers/Parents Survey - click here

Grade Level	Science Education Standard
Grade 4	1.1.1 Students will be able to ask questions about aspects of the phenomena they observe, the conclusions they draw from their models or scientific investigations, each other's ideas, and the information they read.
Grade 5	1.1.1 Students will be able to ask questions about aspects of the phenomena they observe, the conclusions they draw from their models or scientific investigations, each other's ideas, and the information they read.
Grade 6	2.1.1 Students will be able to represent observations and data in order to recognize patterns in the data, the meaning of those patterns, and possible relationships between variables.
Grade 7	2.1.1 Students will be able to represent observations and data in order to recognize patterns in the data, the meaning of those patterns, and possible relationships between variables.
Grade 8	2.1.1 Students will be able to represent observations and data in order to recognize patterns in the data, the meaning of those patterns, and possible relationships between variables.
Grades 9-12	2.1.1 Students will be able to represent observations and data in order to recognize patterns in the data, the meaning of those patterns, and possible relationships between variables.