



# City Nature Challenge



## What is it?

Started in 2016 as a competition between Los Angeles and San Francisco, the City Nature Challenge (CNC) has grown into an international event, motivating people around the world to find and document wildlife in their own cities. Run by the Community Science teams at the California Academy of Sciences and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (NHM), the CNC is an annual four-day global bioblitz at the end of April, where cities are in a collaboration-meets-friendly-competition to see what can be accomplished when we all work toward a common goal.

SCOUTS South Africa is participating in the **City Nature Challenge 2024** which runs from 26th to 30th April 2024. Meerkats, Cubs, Scouts, Rovers, and Scouters are invited to participate and help put Scouting on the Biodiversity Map. We will be observing nature across all areas in South Africa in our homes and gardens, but especially in urban parklands and nature reserves.

## Why?

*It is fun!* It is OUTdoors, and it puts the OUT into ScOUTing!!

We live in one of the most biodiverse regions on earth and there is nature all around us! Knowing what species are in our city and where they are helps us study and protect them, but the **ONLY** way to do that is by all of us – scientists, land managers, and the community, including Meerkats, Cubs, Scouts, Rovers and Scouters, – working together to find and document the nature in our area.

We need to put Scouting on the map and make people worldwide aware of our importance and the difference that Scouts make in the world.

By participating in the City Nature Challenge, not only do you learn more about your local nature, but you can also make your city a better place – for you and other species!

The Western Cape Region has been part of the City Nature Challenge for a number of years and have a history in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 of contributing a significant amount of data towards the challenge. It has proven to be very popular with our members in this Region and the same may very well be the case for other Regions in 2024.

## How?

### **Participating in the City Nature Challenge is as easy as 1 2 3!**

1. **Find wild life** – It can be any WILD plant, animal, or any other evidence of life found in your city.
2. **Take a Picture or Record a Sound** - Take a picture or record the sound of what you find. Be sure to note the location of the critter or plant.
3. **Share** - share your observations through iNaturalist or your city's chosen platform. If it's planted or taken care of by people it is not WILD. Mark it captive/cultivated!

## **What does a Meerkat, Cub, Scout, Rover or Scouter need to do to participate?**

- Have access to a smartphone with a camera and GPS (switched on).
- Have access to a Wi-Fi connection (or data for phone - but this can be expensive).
- Install the iNaturalist app and sign up.
- Join the "Scouts South Africa" project on iNaturalist.

## **Supervision**

- Parents are welcome to supervise Meerkats, Cubs and Scouts who do not have their own smartphone. More specifically, the iNaturalist terms and conditions state "*The Platform and Services are available only to individuals who are at least 13 years old, unless parental permission has been obtained.*"
- Ideally siblings and parents should all have their own login username. However, less optimally, you may also use one username in the family.

## **How to install the iNaturalist App**

- Go to Play Store (Android) or App Store (iPhone) and download and install the iNaturalist app.
- Create a username and password. Click on the hamburger icon (the three horizontal lines) and then Sign Up.
- **IMPORTANT! - Join the Scouts South Africa project in the iNaturalist App.** Click on the hamburger icon (Android) or More (iPhone), Projects, magnifying glass, search for *Scouts South Africa*, click on it, and then click on Join.
- Practice submitting an observation.
  - Click on the + *button* (Android) or *camera button* (iPhone) at the bottom right of the screen.
  - Click on *Add to Projects* and add '*Scouts South Africa*' to each observation.

## **How to submit an Observation**

- The City Nature Challenge runs from 26th to 30th April 2024.
- During those five days and nights, use the iNaturalist app to record as many plants, animals and fungi that you find in your home and garden. Better still, preferably record them *in nature reserves and urban open spaces*.
- Ideally photos should document naturally occurring subjects, including aliens and pests.
- There are no limits to the number of observations. You may submit hundreds if you so wish.
- You may use the phone app (easy) or may use a traditional camera to record your observations – but then you will need to use a computer and a web browser to upload your photographs to the iNaturalist app. Note - The username and password on the phone app is the same as on the web.
- Go to [www.inaturalist.org](http://www.inaturalist.org), login and upload your photographs.
- Everything that can be done on the phone app can be done on the computer by going to [www.inaturalist.org](http://www.inaturalist.org). More seasoned users may prefer to use a camera, computer and web browser, but make sure you can give accurate localities i.e. latitude and longitude.

## **Rules**

- No selfies, people, pets, goats, horses, sheep, cattle and pot plants.
- Photos of animals, plants or fungi growing in your garden naturally, parks or nature reserves and even indoors are good subjects. Look inside and underneath pot plants for woodlice, snails, earthworms, etc., and look on the plants for caterpillars, aphids, scale and other creatures that enjoy your plants. Photograph fleas and ticks on your pets – the scope is limitless!
- Take several pictures of any animal/plant to show different important features.
- Zoom in for small details - it must fill the screen and not be a dot on the picture.
- Only one species per observation. Start another observation for any other / new species.

## **Tips**

- Do not worry about identifying the (CNC teams will do that later).
- Switch on your GPS at least two minutes before you start so as to get accurate locations of the photographs you take.
- Switch off "autocomplete names" and "automatic upload" to save data. Synchronize when you get to a Wi-Fi hotspot.

## **What is in it for me?**

- Any Meerkat, Cub, Scout, or uniformed Scouter who submits ten or more *valid observations* from 26th to 30th April 2024 is eligible to wear the City Nature Challenge badge on their Scout uniform. The exact colour of the 2024 badge is yet to be decided, but it will look good.
- Participation in the **2024 City Nature Challenge** will help to promote SCOUTS South Africa.
- You will be contributing to a worthwhile conservation project with thousands of other participants around the world.
- Participating Scouts in the Western Cape Region will earn points for the *Tonkin Trophy* for their Group.



## **Checking your Observations**

- It is important to check the number of valid observations that you have uploaded to the iNaturalist website by clicking on the following link: <https://www.inaturalist.org/observations>. Scroll down and look for your username.
- The number of observations alongside your name is officially your contribution. If it does not match the number of observations you see on your phone then you need to fix it and re-upload the missing observations.
- In order to do so:
  - Synchronise your phone to make sure everything is loaded. What is on your phone will not be uploaded to iNaturalist until you sync. Remember to sync after you make any changes on your phone.
  - Did you join the Scouts South Africa project as a once off?
  - Did you add the Scouts South Africa project to all your observations? Check your observations, and, if not, then add the project.
  - Did the pictures upload correctly? Occasionally if you upload with a weak signal the picture fails - sync your phone!
  - It is important to note that - *Observations without pictures, dates and localities do not count towards the City Nature Challenge.*
  - Do all your observations have the correct date (26-30 April 2024). Check the dates – if the date did not upload correctly, then fix it.
  - Have you hidden your location? It is preferred that your location is not hidden. It should be "Open", but if you are worried or have privacy issues or concerns, then set it to "Obscured". Do not use "Private", because your observations will not count if set to "Private".
  - Does your locality have an acceptable Locality Accuracy? It should be in the range of 2 to 20 metres. If it is over 50 kilometres it will not be recorded as being in the city. Please double-check your locality and fix it if need be!
  - Did you remember to synchronise again after you made your changes?
  - You may also make changes by using a computer and logging on to <https://www.inaturalist.org>. This may be an easier and quicker option to resolve any issues that may arise.

## SCOUTS South Africa Representatives

A *City Nature Challenge Champion* will be appointed in each Region to answer any questions that you may have regarding the challenge.

Nigel Forshaw, based in the Western Cape, is the National Champion of the **City Nature Challenge 2024** and can be contacted via email at [nigel.forshaw@scouts.org.za](mailto:nigel.forshaw@scouts.org.za).

## **Further Information**

Want to find out more about the City Nature Challenge 2024:

<https://www.citynaturechallenge.org/>

Want to find out which cities in southern Africa are taking part in the City Nature Challenge 2024:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2024-southern-africa/>

View the City Nature Challenge 2024 Global results here:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2024>

Take a look at the SCOUTS South Africa City Nature Challenge project.

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/scouts-south-africa>

Leaderboard for SCOUTS SA contributions to the 2024 City Nature Challenge:

[https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?d1=2024-04-26&d2=2024-04-30&place\\_id=any&project\\_id=scouts-south-africa&subview=table&view=observers](https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?d1=2024-04-26&d2=2024-04-30&place_id=any&project_id=scouts-south-africa&subview=table&view=observers)

Join in the **2024 City Nature Challenge!** Make observations of wild plants and animals 26-30 April 2024, and take part in one of the largest community science events in the world while helping us better understand – and therefore, take care of – nature that lives in and around urban areas.

