

Stewardship Tips for Walk Leaders
DC Area City Nature Challenge

The City Nature Challenge is an opportunity to explore and enjoy biodiversity through respectfully observing and documenting the wild plants and animals who share our environment. **Consider these planning questions, and then tailor the template on page 2 to your walk. Each site, audience and event is unique! Feel free to save your event-specific piece in [this folder](#) as a helpful example for others.**

PLANNING QUESTIONS: Pre-Event Prep

Know before you go: lay of the land

- ☐ What are the rules and norms for the site you're visiting?
 - ☐ Are people required to stay on trails at this location?
 - ☐ Are smoking or pets allowed? What do people do with trash and biodegradables?
 - ☐ Do you need to provide for boot cleaning (e.g. [decontamination for wetlands](#); [brushing for seeds of invasive plants](#))? What footwear should participants wear?
- ☐ What do participants need to know about habitat, terrain and seasonality?
 - ☐ Safety: Hazards such as cliffs, known yellowjacket nest, snake or ticky areas, poison ivy and nettle areas
 - ☐ Protecting nature: bird nesting areas, amphibian nurseries, fragile boggy areas, sensitive locations where you want to keep people away or on the edges

Prepare to manage well:

- ☐ How many people are you expecting? What will you do if more show up? Consider limiting registration to minimize site impacts. Consider how to break participants up into smaller groups with less impact, or who to recruit as a helper.
- ☐ Event logistics: How long will the outing last? Is this a loop trail or out-and-back? Are participants expected to stay together or explore on their own? What if someone needs to leave early? What about bathroom facilities? [Do you want to show or provide copies of a trail map?]
- ☐ iNaturalist logistics: Know how to help participants turn Location Services turned ON so that photos are geotagged. Should people upload observations on site or take pictures & audio and upload later? Will you be on private land or sensitive areas where location should be obscured? Are there areas with captive/cultivated species that need to be tagged as such?
- ☐ Review [Leave No Trace Principles](#), [LNT for City Parks](#), [American Birding Association Code of Ethics](#), and [iNat Community Guidelines](#); decide which are essential to highlight in your intro.
- ☐ Prepare to do more leading and managing than observing! If YOU want lots of observations of this area, a pre-hike on your own will allow that AND give you a fresh view of the site features described above to share with your participants.

Day of Event Intro: Prepare a short, cheerful and meaningful intro on good stewardship to your participants using the template below.

During Event: Provide gentle guidance to support a spirit of stewardship during your event. Use skillful intervention strategies; positively redirect as needed. When feasible, keep your group on durable surfaces.

Event End and Follow Up:

- Can you commit to following up and helping with ID on participants' observations? If so, have a way to capture their iNat handles and give them a deadline for uploading that works for you.
- What handouts do you want to leave them with? Consider one CNC postcard per person with your email and iNat handle and the project url:
<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2025-washington-dc-metro-area> written in.
- What remaining [CNC events](#) do you want to recommend to them?

Day OF Checklist for Walk Leaders
DC Area City Nature Challenge

Your walk is almost here! Consider these pointers for day-of to make sure you have the resources you need and that walk participants are well-prepared. This is a TEMPLATE. Use as needed. Replace blue text with your details, delete if not applicable, and/or choose one of the options provided.

Name of Walk

Location

Date and Time of Event

WHAT TO BRING

- ☐ Smartphone
- ☐ Participant list
- ☐ Trail map(s)
- ☐ Training handouts
- ☐ [Taking Good Pix for iNat](#)
- ☐ Species lists for site
- ☐ Bags for trash pickup
- ☐ Boot brushes/bleach solution
- ☐ Other Items

WHAT TO SAY: INTRO SUGGESTIONS

Welcome to the City Nature Challenge and this site

- ☐ The City Nature Challenge is an opportunity to explore and enjoy biodiversity through respectfully observing and documenting the wild plants and animals who share our environment.
- ☐ Introduce yourself and any co-leaders
- ☐ Participant intros (optional: their level of experience with iNat, their area of natural history interest and level of expertise, their iNat handle, have they been here before?)
- ☐ Who protected this site? Who manages it?
- ☐ Site rules
 - ☐ Stay on trails/fan out
 - ☐ Are smoking or pets allowed?
 - ☐ No Trash park, take your trash and biodegradables home with you/Trash can locations
 - ☐ Restroom location/No restrooms available
- ☐ Habitat, terrain and seasonality
 - ☐ Safety and hazards: cliffs/ known yellowjacket nests/ snake areas/ ticky areas/ poison ivy areas [show people how to ID]/ nettle areas [show people how to ID]
 - ☐ Protecting nature: bird nesting areas/ amphibian nurseries/ fragile boggy areas/ sensitive locations / no-go locations
- ☐ Event logistics:
 - ☐ We will stay together on the trails/ We will fan out and explore in small groups/ We will stay within sight of each other/ We will stay within speaking range of each other/ We will stay within calling range of each other
 - ☐ How long will the outing last? What if someone needs to leave early?
- ☐ iNaturalist pointers (include a quick walk-through if people are iNat novices):
 - ☐ Everyone please turn Location Services ON so that photos are geotagged (demo if needed).
 - ☐ Please upload observations on site/ Please take pictures & audio and upload later. If uploading onsite, identify people in the group familiar with iOS/Android operating systems as resources.

- ☐ It's OK to set Geoprivacy to Open here/ We are on private or sensitive land so please set Geoprivacy to Obscured for today's observations (demonstrate if needed.)
- ☐ Identify areas with captive/cultivated species that need to be tagged (demonstrate if needed).
- ☐ Capture people's iNat handles if you plan to help with their ID's.
- ☐ Stewardship principles (feel free to add additional - use card if helpful)
 - ☐ Today we are guests in someone else's home. What ideas do you have about how we should behave as good guests? [If not brought up by the group, highlight the following]:
 - ☐ We will look under logs and rocks but always put them back in place.
 - ☐ Don't remove any flower, plant, animal or rock, but we encourage you to pick up trash.
 - ☐ Put a hand or common object in your photos for scale, but if you have sunscreen or insect repellent on your hands please don't touch insects or amphibians.
 - ☐ Please keep bird calling (pishing) to a minimum/Don't use pishing/ Don't use recordings of bird sounds/Don't photograph nests.
 - ☐ Observe wildlife quietly and respectfully. Avoid loud noises and sudden movements. This will also help you get more observations!
 - ☐ Watch where you put your feet. Don't trample plants; take pictures of them!
 - ☐ Add additional stewardship guidelines, Do's/Don'ts
 - ☐

During Event: Provide gentle guidance to support a spirit of stewardship during your event. Use skillful intervention strategies; positively redirect as needed. When feasible, keep your group on durable surfaces.

WHAT TO SAY: WRAP-UP

- ☐ Thank you for contributing to our regional and planetary knowledge through your data collection! It's important to conservation and to science.
- ☐ Share any materials, such as your contact info on CNC postcard and/or the project url: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2025-washington-dc-metro-area>
- ☐ Remember to upload your observations by May 4 at the latest; earlier if you want community help with ID's.
- ☐ Describe how people can contact you if they need help with a specific question or ID: email, iNat comment on observation with @mention, and/or iNat private message.
- ☐ Remember to tag captive/cultivated (planted) observations. (Demonstrate if needed.)
- ☐ I challenge you all to make additional observations in your neighborhood! Birds, garden and lawn weeds, and garden bugs are all wild; garden plants and street trees are OK too if marked Captive/Cultivated.
- ☐ I can help you with your ID's if I have your handle and you upload by (date).
- ☐ Recommend other CNC events that might be of interest to this group, including walks and ID events.
- ☐ Can people come back here on their own or only as part of a guided trip?
- ☐ Make any additional plugs for the organization that owns this land or takes care of the trails.
- ☐ Your safety: Remember to wash your hands before you eat, do a tick check when you get home, and put clothing directly into the laundry if you have been in poison ivy.
- ☐
- ☐