

iNaturalist Observations

Here's one suggestion for Volunteer Hours that you can do at any time: [Blackland Prairie iNaturalist Project: Field Research](#). **This does NOT have to be an organized outing with a group.** You can go out on your own, or with a friend, and make iNaturalist observations. If you are going for a walk and make a few iNaturalist observations of interesting things you see, that's great, but it would NOT count as Volunteer Hours. However, if you go out with the *express purpose* of making iNaturalist observations, and spend most of the time you're out there making observations, or taking pictures to enter later, that DOES count as Volunteer Hours, including your travel time, and the time you spend at home entering your observations, trying to identify them, etc.

- o Here's an example: Say I decide to spend a morning making observations at the Heard. It is a 30-minute drive each way, plus I spend 2.5 hours making observations. Then, I go home and spend an hour cleaning up my pictures and entering the observations. That would be 4.5 volunteer hours.
- o You don't have to go to any place special, though. One of our richest finds was a "vacant lot" in our neighborhood that Rick and I had walked past for years without every going across it. Half of it is slated to be a Fire Station eventually, and the other half is HOA property. Once we started iNatting, we still walked right past that lot dozens of times while going to "more interesting" places, until one day we decided to cut across it. It turned out to be really rich in biodiversity. This little 6-acre lot had Big Bluestem, Lemon Beebalm, winecups, and much, much more! It also had plenty of Johnson grass and other invasives, but you didn't have to look hard to find some treasures. The field had so much Green Milkweed that we organized a big milkweed rescue and transplanted hundreds of plants. And we discovered, with the help of iNaturalist, Carol Clark, and others, a rare milkweed that had plant nerds driving hours to see it! (Check out the [Future Frisco Fire Station Project](#) on iNaturalist.)

Also on iNaturalist, you can earn volunteer hours in another way: [Blackland Prairie iNaturalist Project: Species ID and Curation \(non-field work\)](#). (Note: The "non-field work" that you do for entering your own observations does NOT go here: anything you do with your own observations is included with Field Research. The stuff you do for other people on iNaturalist goes here, in the Curation bucket. This includes identifying observations other people put it in. Maybe you are a long-time birder and can contribute to bird ID's: excellent! But maybe you don't have any particular expertise yet. You can still help by identifying the "Unknowns"

with a general ID, such as Birds, snakes, plants, etc. This is actually very helpful, and there is a huge need for it! A lot of the expert identifiers don't like to spend time doing it. Here is an identification search for observations in Texas listed as Unknown:

https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/identify?iconic_taxa=unknown Just sign in to iNaturalist, copy and paste that string, and start identifying! Right now, there are over 1000 observations in Texas with no ID, just listed as "Unknown." As you work on these, it's a good idea to copy and paste a message such as: "Just putting a high-level ID for now, to get your observation into a bucket for the right people to see it".

This avoids the problem of people going, "Well, duh! I knew it was a plant! I wanted to find out what KIND of plant it is!" Many newbies don't know about the Computer Vision suggestions, so they enter things as Unknown, never get a response, then give up on iNaturalist. So, take an hour or two some evening and pitch in to help with this. It's important work that needs to be done, and you'll be earning Volunteer Hours, too. It's very easy to get absorbed in this and spend two hours at it before you know it!

Logging Volunteer Service(VH) for iNaturalist Outings, or on your own:

Log this as Volunteer Service Hours:

Opportunity: Blackland Prairie iNaturalist project: Field Research Hours

Date: ACTUAL DATE

Hours: *You should count your time at the event, plus travel time. If you spend additional time at home editing your pictures and entering your observations, you should include that as well.*

Description: Group Outing to PLACE or Individual Observations; took pictures and made observations for entry into iNaturalist. (add more details if you like)

Log this as Volunteer Service Hours:

Opportunity: Blackland Prairie iNaturalist project: Species ID and Curation (non-field work)

Date: ACTUAL DATE

Hours: TIME SPENT

Description: Identified unknown species in iNaturalist. (add more details if you like)