

City Nature Challenge 2023

Baltimore Metropolitan Area

FAQ for Partners

THE BASICS

What is the City Nature Challenge (CNC)?

The City Nature Challenge (CNC) is an annual effort among cities across the globe to find and document plants and wildlife over a four-day period. Started in 2016 for the first-ever Community Science Day, the community science teams at Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and California Academy of Sciences dreamed up the CNC as a fun way to capitalize on their home cities' friendly rivalry and hold a community science event around urban biodiversity. The first CNC was an eight-day competition between Los Angeles and San Francisco, engaging residents and visitors in documenting nature to better understand urban biodiversity. In 2017 the CNC went national, and in 2018, the CNC became an international event. The 2022 CNC recorded more than 1.5 million observations across 445 cities worldwide.

When is the 2023 City Nature Challenge happening?

Observation Period 📷 Friday, April 28th – Monday, May 1st

- This is the time to go out and make observations! Explore your backyard, park, city, or anywhere else in the Baltimore Metro Area and take as many pictures as you can of different wildlife.
- If you are planning on hosting a public or private observation event, it must fall within this time frame.
- Photos taken after May 1st will not count toward the City Nature Challenge.

Upload and Identification Period 🔍 Friday, April 28th – Sunday, May 7th

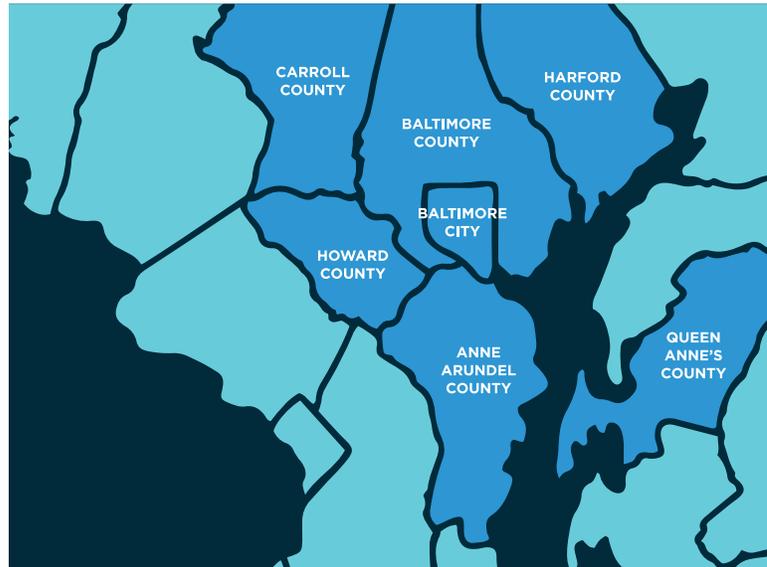
- Between these dates you can upload any photos you took before May 1st to iNaturalist. This will make them official iNaturalist observations.
- We need help identifying every species that was observed. If you want to help, you can suggest species IDs on iNaturalist.

Results Announced 🏆 Monday, May 8th

- The City Nature Challenge international organizers will release the results and announce the winner!

How are observations counted?

All observations made in the following counties during the observation period of the challenge (April 28 – May 1) and uploaded to iNaturalist by May 7 will automatically be counted towards Baltimore's CNC totals: Baltimore City, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, Howard and Queen Anne's Counties. [This iNaturalist project](#) will collect the iNaturalist observations for Baltimore's totals. The larger international iNaturalist project will display our project's totals along with the 400+ other participating cities and will act as the leaderboard.



How do they decide who wins?

Results are calculated directly from the iNaturalist project, so only the observations finalized by May 8th will count. Winners are announced in several categories, including the top number of observations, the top number of species identified, and the top number of observers.

Why participate?

There is nature all around us, even in our cities! Knowing what species are in our metro area 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 - working together to find and document the nature in our area. By participating in the CNC, 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! In Baltimore, our 2018 – 2020 CNC research-grade data was used in the [Global Biodiversity Information Facility](#) and in the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition's [Baltimore Biodiversity Toolkit](#).

What will the National Aquarium provide?

The National Aquarium will provide coordination between the international organizers and the local Baltimore organizers. They will lead conference calls leading up to the event and send periodic updates about the challenge. They will also provide promotional resources, help with advertising your event(s) should you host one, and your organization will receive recognition on the Aquarium's website. The Aquarium will also host iNaturalist trainings and share resources leading up to the challenge. The challenge is a great way to collaborate with like-minded organizations in the area and advertise your community science events to a larger audience.

FOUR WAYS TO PARTICIPATE

Participation in the CNC is flexible based on what your organization is interested in and has the capacity to do. For 2023, the four options for partner organizations to get involved are:

1) Promote the Challenge, 2) Make Wildlife Observations, 3) Host an Event, 4) Identify Species.

You are welcome to do one, two, three, or all four of those options to be considered a CNC Baltimore partner.

WAYS TO PARTICIPATE: PROMOTE THE CHALLENGE

Recruiting new organizations to participate or advertising the challenge to your organization's contacts. This is done in the months leading up to the challenge.

WAYS TO PARTICIPATE: MAKE WILDLIFE OBSERVATIONS

Get outside! From 12:01am on Friday, April 28 when the challenge starts through 11:59pm on Monday, May 1 when the observation period ends, we need people to make wildlife observations within the Baltimore metropolitan area. Take a picture of any living thing you see (birds, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, fish, snails, spiders, insects, plants, fungi, etc.) and upload your findings on the free iNaturalist app.

WAYS TO PARTICIPATE: HOST AN EVENT

What an event looks like is based on what your organization is interested in and has the capacity to do. For example, you could lead a guided nature walk or have an event where your organization and volunteers work together to make observations and offer identification help. If it's an event where you'll be getting volunteers from the general public to register, one of the things the Aquarium will help with is advertising the event on the Aquarium's website.

What will I need to know to host an event?

A date, time, location, leader, audience, and device(s) to record observations. Please be sure to share all this information with Scott Shatto (SShatto@aqua.org) so that he can keep track of everyone's events.

Date and time: Any time between 12:01am on Friday, April 28 and 11:59pm on Monday, May 1.

Location: Must be within the Baltimore metropolitan area to count (Baltimore City, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, Howard and Queen Anne's Counties). Recommended locations include local parks, gardens, hiking trails, nature preserves, sidewalks, areas with trees, your backyard, etc.

Leader: Your organization's main contact. This person will need to know how to use iNaturalist and handle event logistics.

Audience: Will your event be private or open to the public? If it's public, you could engage members of your nonprofit or community group, coworkers, volunteers, students, etc.

Device: You'll need to have a device with the iNaturalist app downloaded for Apple or Android. You can use a smartphone, iPad, or tablet. You can also use a camera to take photos and upload directly to iNaturalist via computer later, but please make sure to note the location where you took the photo as you'll need to manually add that in iNaturalist for it to count.

Does my event have to be open to the public?

No. You're welcome to have a private event with just your coworkers, for example.

What kinds of events have been held in the past?

Events held in the past included, but were not limited to:

- Stream monitoring and fish sampling
- Students making observations around their school's campus
- School field trips to monitor wetland plants
- Library presentation with a guided walk
- Trash/debris cleanups while making wildlife observations along the way
- Tree planting with exploration of nearby park space
- Bird walk
- Expert-led guided hike
- Engaging Zoo and Aquarium visitors in walks around the campus
- BioBlitz

Do I need to be a wildlife expert?

Nope! All skill levels are welcome to participate. If you don't know what a species is, just upload the photo to iNaturalist and the other iNaturalist users can help identify it for you. The app will also take an educated guess as to what species is in your photo.

WAYS TO PARTICIPATE: IDENTIFY SPECIES

During the challenge and in the week following the challenge (Friday, April 28 – Sunday, May 7), iNaturalist users will be needed to help verify observations and identify species that have been uploaded. Wildlife experts and enthusiasts who are comfortable with species identification are welcome to help. This can be done online via the iNaturalist website. This increases the quality of Baltimore's data.

INTERESTED IN PARTNERING WITH US?

Please fill out the [Partner Interest Form here](#) to:

- Get regular updates on the CNC 2023
- Receive access to different resources to use while observing or while hosting an event
- Have your organization and event promoted on the National Aquarium website

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

Scott Shatto, Conservation Project Manager at the National Aquarium. SShatto@aqua.org
410-576-1068

RESOURCES

citynaturechallenge.org – official CNC international website

- [Results from past challenges](#)
- [Education toolkit](#)

www.aqua.org/baltimore-cnc – official CNC Baltimore webpage **Note: this page will be update with 2023 information in early February.**

- Overview of Baltimore-specific challenge information
- Pledge for general public “solo” volunteers to get email reminders to participate before and during the challenge. Pledgers will also get a results email after the challenge
- Partner list with your logo and website link
- Event list where we can advertise partner’s public events (coming soon)

iNaturalist.org – community science platform used for the challenge

- [Getting Started on iNaturalist](#)
- [2023 City Nature Challenge: Baltimore iNaturalist project](#)
- [2022 City Nature Challenge: Baltimore iNaturalist project](#) – good guide to what we’ll likely see this year