Creating an account:

1. Let's start from the very beginning. Once you've clicked "Sign-up", your page will look like this:

Those top four boxes are where you enter your information:

1. The first box is where you enter the email you want to use. This will allow iNaturalist to send you updates.
2. The second box is where you create your username, or the name that will appear on your iNaturalist account. In general, a username can be almost anything, however a lot of people just use their names. For example, mine is a combination of my first and last names: emilyanderson2. I have the "2" at the end of my name because someone else was already listed as "emilyanderson".
3. The third box is for your password. You should make your password something that will be difficult for other people to guess, but easy for you to remember. Many people recommend a combination of letters, numbers, and symbols. If you're concerned about remembering your password, you can also write it down somewhere safe.
4. The fourth box is where you re-type your password. This is to make sure that your password wasn't misspelled the first time.

2. Once all of this information is entered in the top four boxes, click on the box that says "I'm not a robot". This just lets iNaturalist know that it's a real person creating the account and not some kind of artificial intelligence.

3. The final steps before hitting "Create an Account" are to decide whether to check the boxes asking about licensing your photos, sounds, and observations, and about iNaturalist storing your personal information.

☑ Yes, license my photos, sounds, and observations so scientists can use my data.
Learn More

If you choose to license your photos, sounds, and observations, it means that people can copy your photos and observations without asking as long as they give you credit. In general, this is the most effective way to provide scientists with access to your photos and observations. If you decide later that you don't want this license, I can help walk you through how to change it and what other options exist.

☐ I consent to allow iNaturalist to store and process limited kinds of personal information about me in order to manage my account
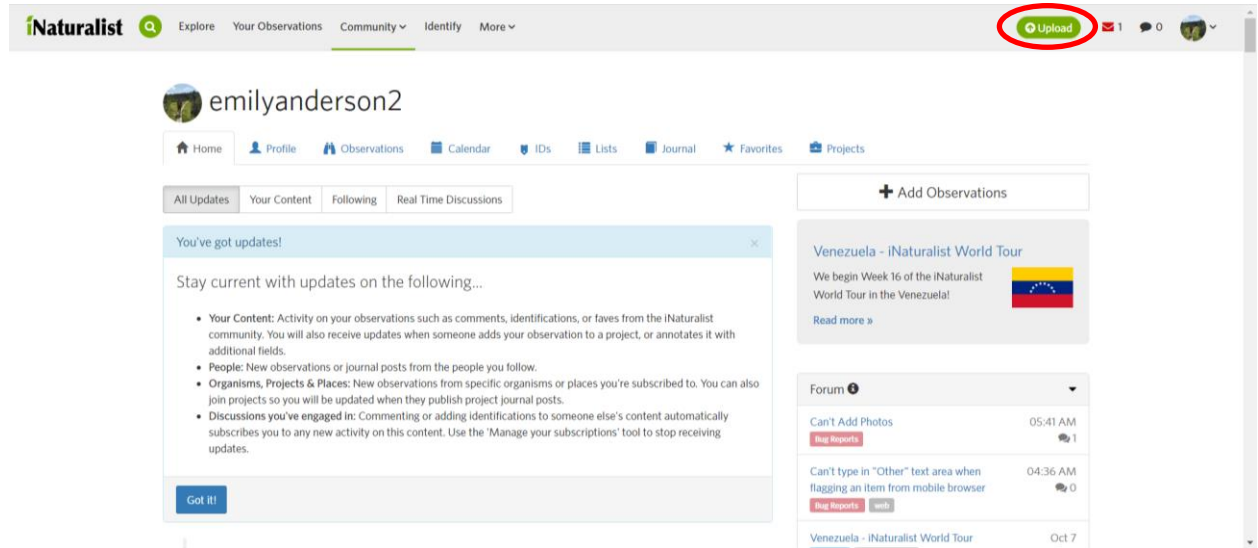Learn More

The second box is asking for your consent to store some of your personal information. This is quite common on many websites and laws are in place to protect sensitive information. For iNaturalist, this is mostly information like your username and email, and is necessary for their compliance with privacy laws. This box should be checked too. If you have any questions or concerns about this, I can help you find more information.

4. Now you're ready to hit "Create an Account"! You don't need to worry about the "Sign up with Facebook" or "Sign up with Google" buttons unless you wish to set up your iNaturalist account using existing information from one of these two websites. If you have a Facebook or Google account that you want to use instead of the steps listed above, I am happy to help walk you through that! Otherwise, just ignore those options.
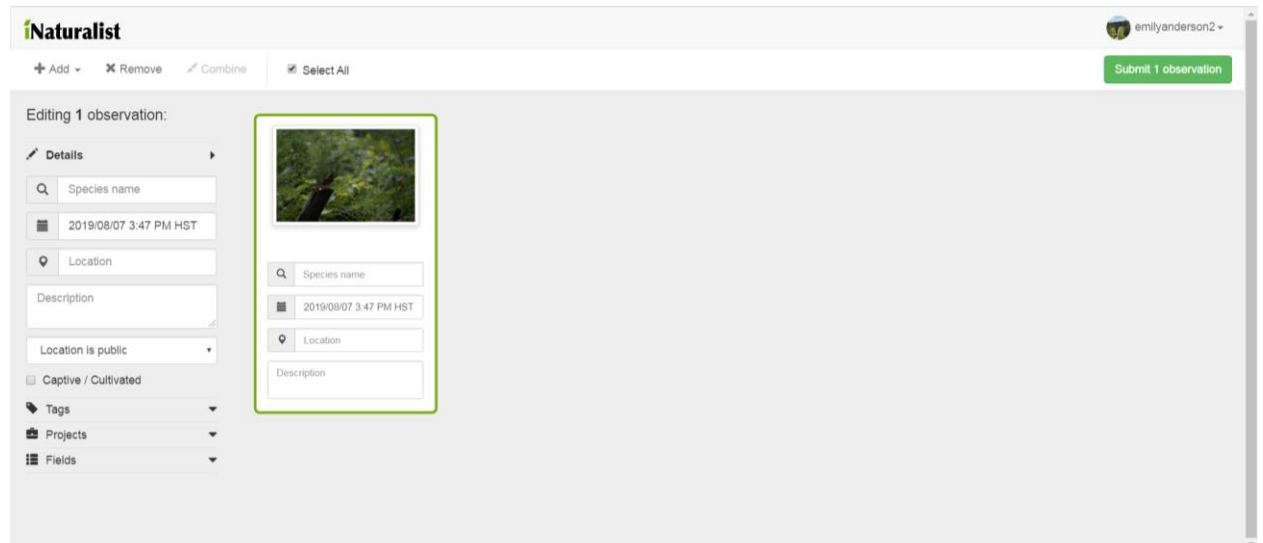
Entering your first observation:

Once you get signed up, you will probably want to start entering your photos of plants/animals/fungi you saw. Below is a step-by-step guide of how to do that:

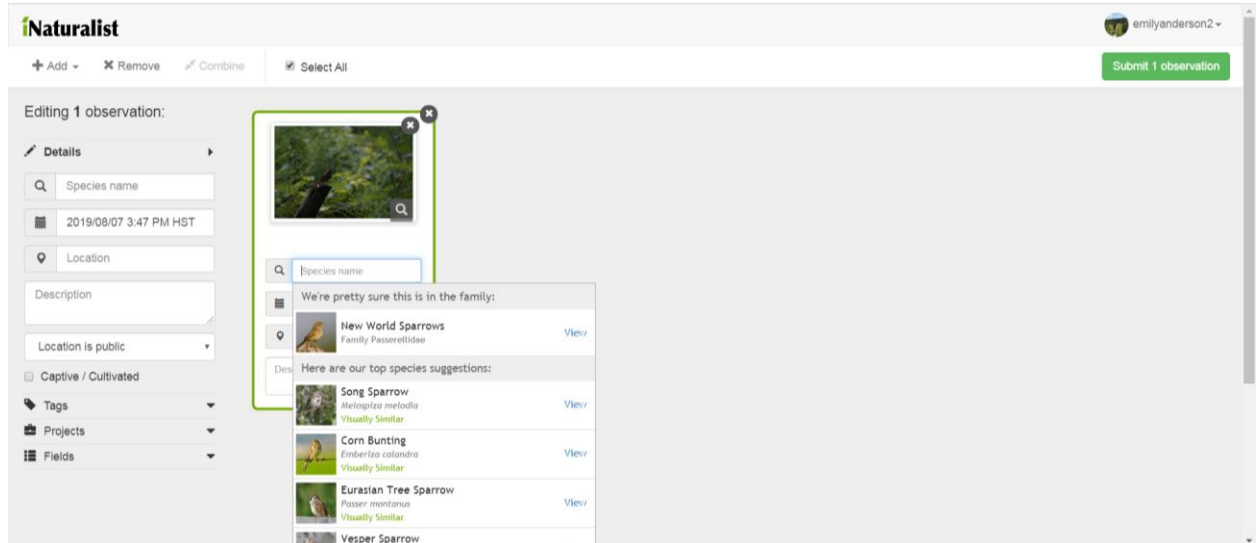1. When you first login to your account, you should find a page that looks like this:

   To get to the page where you can upload your photo observations, click the green "Upload" button in the top right corner of screen (circled in red in the picture).

2. After clicking "Upload" you can upload your first photo by clicking "Choose Files". From there, you can go in and find the picture that you want to upload and click "Open".

3. After clicking "Open" you will find yourself at a page like this:

4. Below your picture, you will see four boxes: species name, date and time, location, and description.
5. Let's start first with figuring out what you saw. Click in the box that says "Species name". You should get a screen that looks like this:
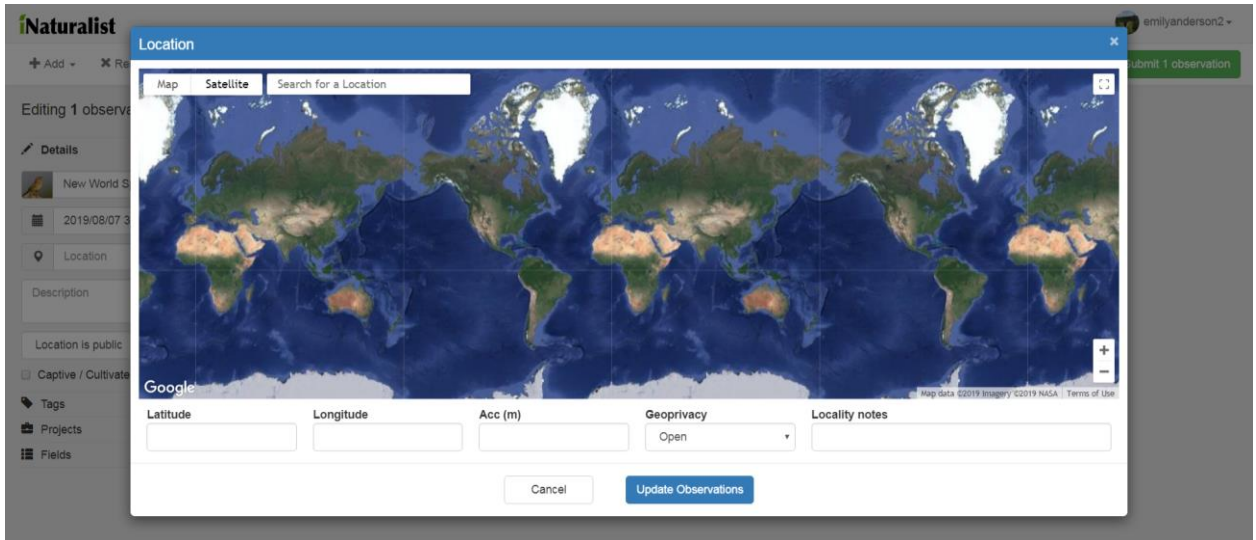

As you can see from mine, it gave me a lot of suggestions about what it thinks the bird in my picture is. If you already know what you saw and see it on the list, great! Go ahead and click on it. If you don't know what species it is, that's ok too. With iNaturalist it is better to stick with what you do know. In my example, I'm confident that this is belongs to the genus "New World Sparrows", like is suggested at the top of my list, however I don't know which species it is. So I selected "New World Sparrows".
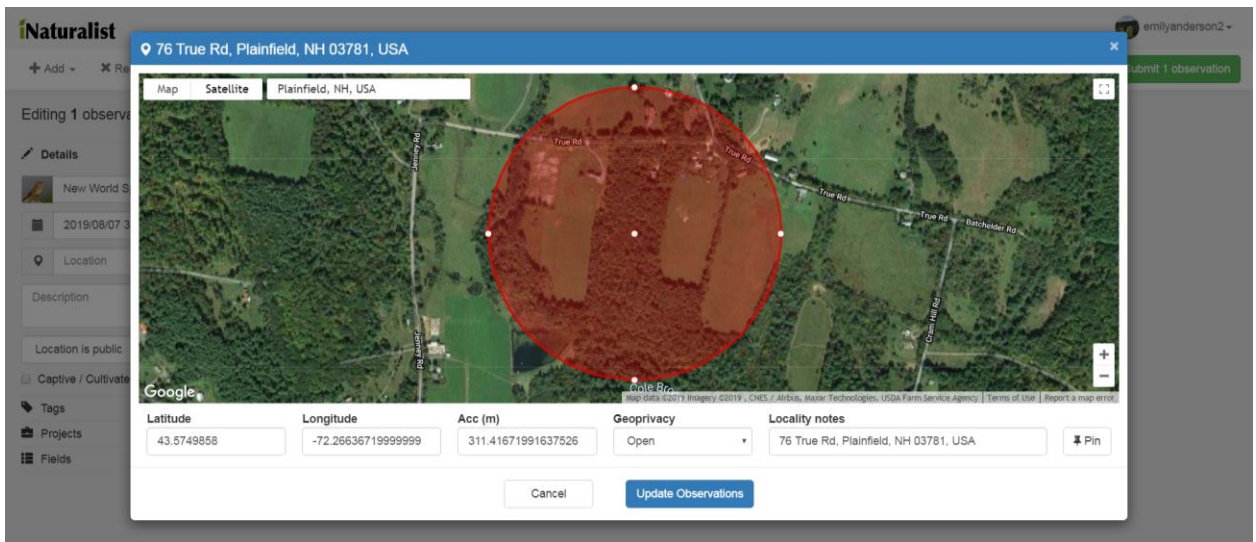
The nice thing about iNaturalist is that other people often come along and verify your observations. So if you don't know what something is, chances are someone else will. Sometimes you may only know that you saw an animal, plant, or fungi. That's ok too! Those helpful iNaturalist identifiers will come along and try to identify it.

iNaturalist is great at identifying all kinds of life, however they're not always perfect. If their suggestions are wrong, you can type in the box as well to identify your observation yourself.

6. The next box is for date and time. Your camera usually does this for you, so you shouldn't have to worry about it. If for some reason this box is blank, you can type the date and time in. It's ok if you don't know the exact time.
7. The following box is for location – where you saw your specimen. Sometimes cameras are able to do this, however not always. As you can see in the picture above, my location box is blank. To add a location, click in the box and it will take you to a page that looks like this:

If you know the address of the place you were, or a rough estimate, you can type it into the "search for a location bar" at the top. If you don't have an address or an estimate of one, you can use the +/- buttons in the bottom right corner of the map to zoom in on a particular location. Once you type in your address or start zooming in, you will get a big red circle in the middle of your screen, like this:
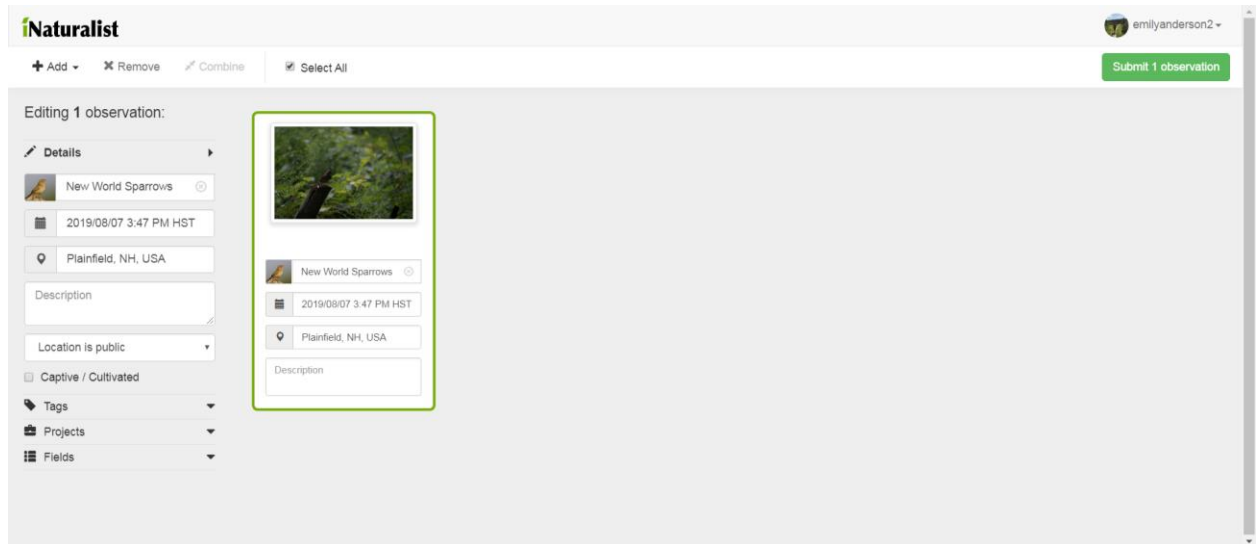

This red circle represents the area where you saw your plant/animal/fungi. The larger the circle, the wider the range of where you could have made your observation. It's best to be as specific as possible, but still try to stick with what you know is true. Once you're satisfied with where your circle is placed, click "Update Observations" and it will add the coordinates to your observation.
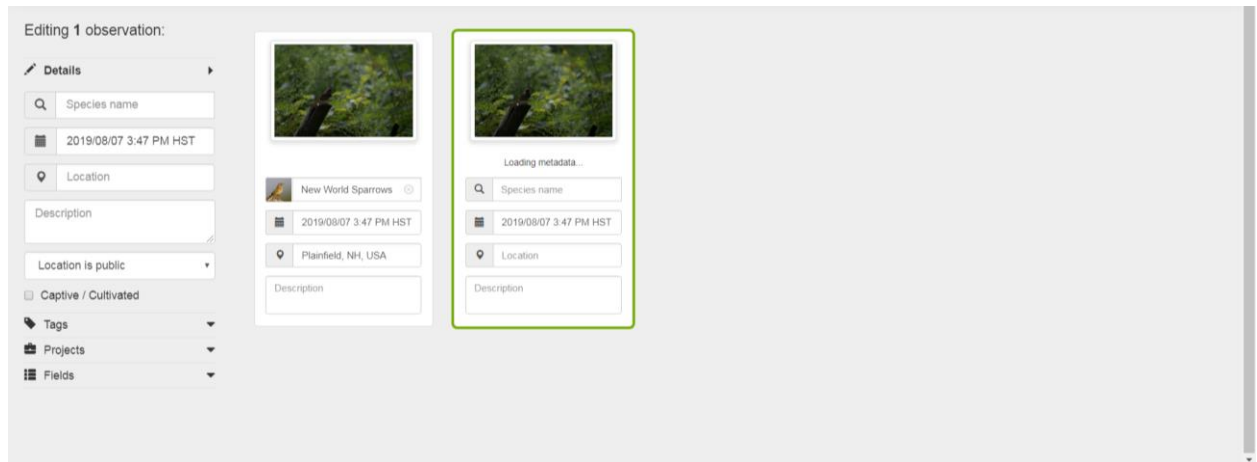
8. The fourth box is for writing a description of your plant/animal/fungi. For example, that's a place where I could write "carrying nesting materials" if I saw my bird carrying nesting materials. It's a

space where you can write down anything else that you may want those viewing your photos to know.
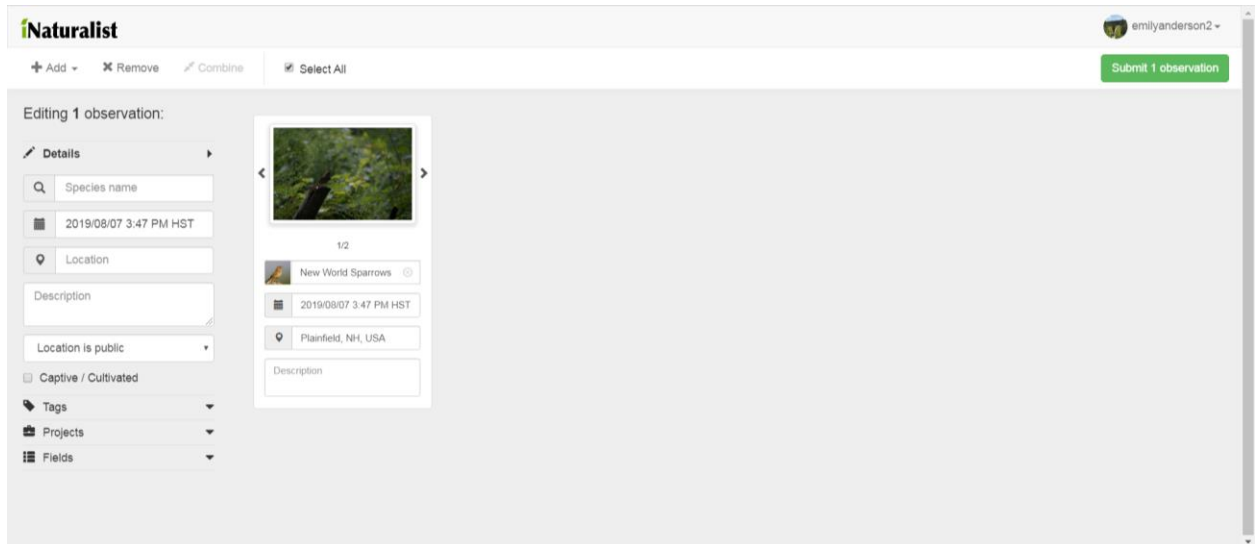
9. But what if you have multiple photos of the same plant/animal/fungi from the same photoshoot? You can add them to your current observation! (If you only have one picture to add, you can skip this step)

In the top left corner, click the "Add" button and then click "Photo or sound". This will bring up your files. Follow the same process of selecting your file and clicking "Open" as you did for the first picture. Then your page should look like this:

To add this second photo to your observation, click and hold on the second picture highlighted in green above. Drag it over to your first photo and release it. This will stack your second photo behind your first.

See how my picture now says "1/2"? This means that I have successfully added the second picture to my observation of "New World Sparrows".

10. On your screen and on my picture above, you will probably notice a couple of lines I haven't mentioned yet.

   The box that says "Location is public" is for changing who can view the location of your observation. Leaving your location as "public" allows other people to see where your observation was made. Some people choose to make their location private, however leaving it public helps researchers know where your observation was made.

   Marking "Captive/Cultivated" is for observations of animals and plants that are controlled or maintained by people, such as ornamental trees or tame peacocks. This is important to scientists who may use your data to map where plants/animals/fungi are found. You should select this anytime you take a picture of a captive animal or a cultivated plant.

   Tags, projects, and fields are different ways to catalog your observation. If you're interested, I'm happy to explain more about each of them.

11. Now you're ready to submit your first observation! Click the green "Submit 1 observation" button in the top right corner of your screen and it will get added to your list of observations.