

The Friends' iNaturalist biological database project:

What is iNaturalist? A web-based application for recording, storing, and retrieving biological information, it is operated by the California Academy of Sciences. It stores observation records, including photographs and sounds, which can be reviewed and validated by experts.

Goals of the Project: 1) provide refuge staff with a high quality database of refuge wildlife species and their distributions, 2) provide Friends members with a means of recording and making available to others biological observations made in field trips and casual sitings.

Accessing iNaturalist:

On a Personal computer (it is probably easiest to do this before using the smartphone)

- 1- go to www.iNaturalist.org
- 2- make up a username and password
- 3- after signing in, go to **Projects** along the top of the webpage
- 4- scroll down to **Browse Projects**
- 5- in the search box at the top, put in **Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys**, and press **search**
- 6- under it you will find a subproject called Vista
- 6- clicking on the project brings you to a page with a map; you can look a recent observations and add observations of your own, by clicking on the button at the top right of the page

On a Smartphone

- 1- go to the applications store (Apple or Android) and download the free iNaturalist app.; Once you sign in with your username and password, you should stay signed in automatically
- 2- you can add an observation by clicking on the + (plus sign) at the top right of the screen.

About observations:

Any and all observations can be added; for example, you saw a bald eagle near refuge headquarters sometime last year. Observations are potentially more valuable, however, if you have a photograph or sound recording, and time and location information.

If you take a photo with a smartphone and have its GPS activated, not only the photograph, but also the "metadata" – time and geographic coordinates will be recorded. These can be uploaded to the database by checking a box near the photo **Browse** button, and selecting a photograph. If you are using a regular camera, you need to upload from a computer. Most cameras record time only, but if you may be able find the location by zooming in on the map on the web page and dropping a pin on the site of the observation. The maps are very detailed and locations can often be recorded quite precisely.

If experts come across your records, they may concur with your identification or offer an alternative. If the record of your observation includes a recognizable photo, time, and geographic coordinates, and one or more experts agree, your record will be labeled "research grade" meaning that it has been verified.

Call (352-339-4706) or e-mail (russ@lighthallbooks.com) me if you encounter any snags.