Using iNaturalist for your Lancaster District Green Space

This short guide will show you how to use [iNaturalist](#), a free biodiversity recording website and app, to create an online **Collection project** for your green space. Once set up, this project will automatically monitor the plants and wildlife that people record when they visit your space.

Help

I'm happy to help you set up projects, create the necessary maps, and answer any questions. Don't hesitate to get in touch if you need assistance. mark@fairfieldassociation.org

Examples

We already have three local Collection projects you can look at for inspiration:

- [Fairfield Nature Reserve](#)
- [Hermitage Field Community Meadow](#)
- [Claver Hill](#)

How it works

When your Collection project is set up, any observation made on iNaturalist within the boundaries of your green space will automatically appear in your project. The person making the recording doesn't need to be a member of your group, as all observations within your space's boundaries are included.

You can share a link to your iNaturalist project on your own website or social media so everyone can see it. Everything is free, and once it's set up, you don't need to do anything else.

Setting up a project

Requirements

To set up a Collection project yourself, you'll need two things:

- an iNaturalist account
- you must have already made 50 observations

If you can't meet these requirements, I can set up a Collection project for you or someone else could.

Before you start: creating a "Place"

First you need to establish the geographic boundaries for your project by creating a **KML map file**. This is the one slightly difficult part of the process, and I'm happy to do this for you if you have any problems.

The easiest way to create the KML map file is using Google MyMaps.

1. Go to Google MyMaps https://mymaps.google.com/.
2. Create a new map.
3. Click the "Draw a line" icon and create a **polygon** that defines the boundaries of your green space. Don't worry if it's not perfect.
4. Export the shape as a KML file.
5. Give your file a clear name (e.g., greaves-park-boundary-map).

There's a helpful online tutorial with screenshots showing how to do this.

Once you have your KML file, you must register your space as a "Place" on iNaturalist. This step establishes the official geographic boundaries that your project will use to automatically pull in observations.

1. Log in to iNaturalist and go to: https://www.inaturalist.org/places/new.

2. Give your place a short name, for example, "Greaves Park".

3. Choose "Lancaster City Council, England, GB Local Administrative Area" as the parent area.

4. Upload your KML file.

5. Select the appropriate place type (in most cases, this will be "open space").

6. Tick "Check lists allowed".

Creating the project

Adding visuals and descriptions

Before you begin, gather the following assets for your project:

- a short title for your project. Use the name of your green space, not your group (e.g., "Greaves Park," not "Friends of Greaves Park")

- a brief description of around 200 characters

- a banner image, ideally 760×320 pixels

- a logo (square, minimum 72×72 pixels)

- a hex code for a custom main colour (optional)

Next steps

1. Go to https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/new

2. Scroll down to "Collection Projects" and click "Get Started".

3. Fill in the **Project Name**, **Project Summary**, and upload your **icon** and **project banner**. You can also choose a custom colour if you want.

4. Make sure "Collection" is selected as the **Project Type**.

5. Under **"Observation Requirements,"** where it says, "Include Places," type the exact name of the place you created. Select it when it appears in the dropdown menu.

6. Leave the **Taxa** and **Users** sections blank.

7. Leave all other settings at their default.

8. Click "DONE".

That's it! Your iNaturalist Collection project is now a valuable tool for monitoring the biodiversity of your green space.