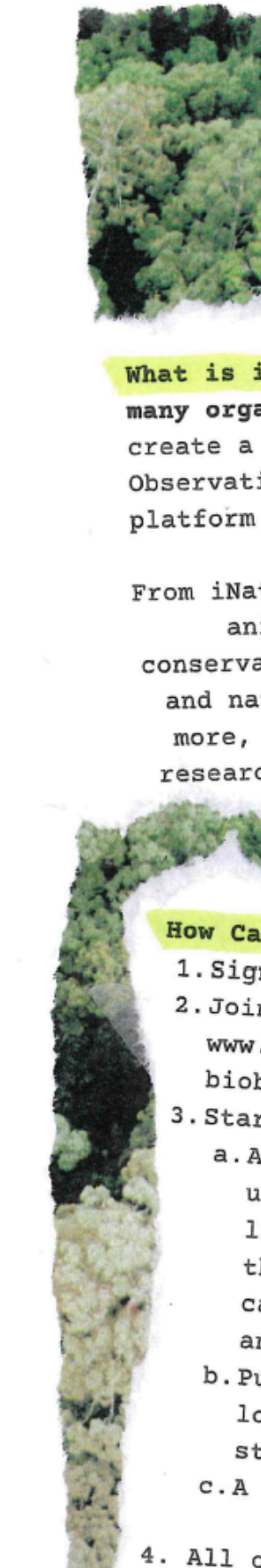




BERGEN BackYard Bioblitz

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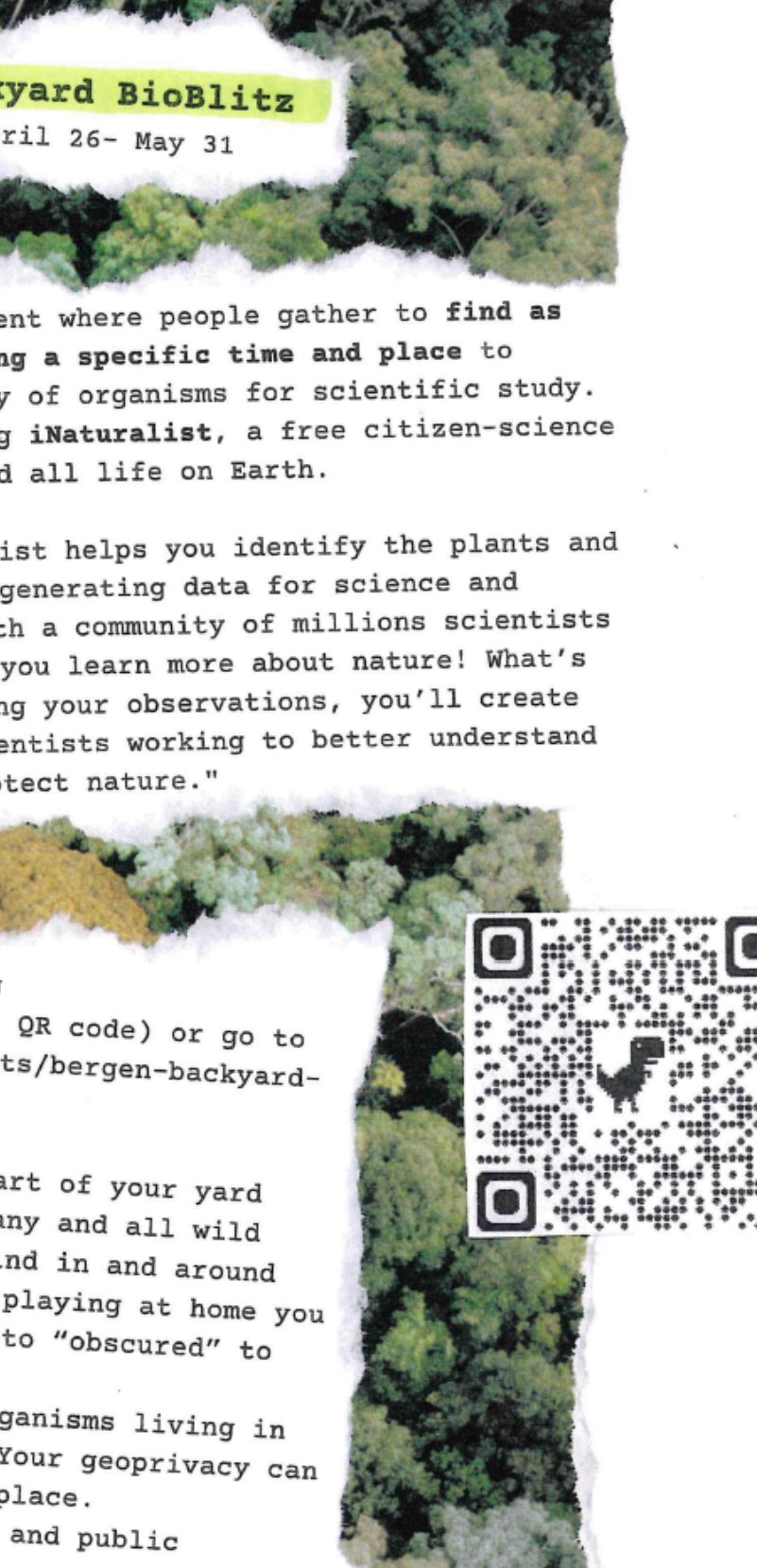


Bergen Backyard BioBlitz

Duration: April 26- May 31

What is it: A bioblitz is an event where people gather to find as many organisms as possible during a specific time and place to create a more complete inventory of organisms for scientific study. Observations are cataloged using iNaturalist, a free citizen-science platform for documenting any and all life on Earth.

From iNaturalist.org: "iNaturalist helps you identify the plants and animals around you while generating data for science and conservation. Get connected with a community of millions scientists and naturalists who can help you learn more about nature! What's more, by recording and sharing your observations, you'll create research-quality data for scientists working to better understand and protect nature."



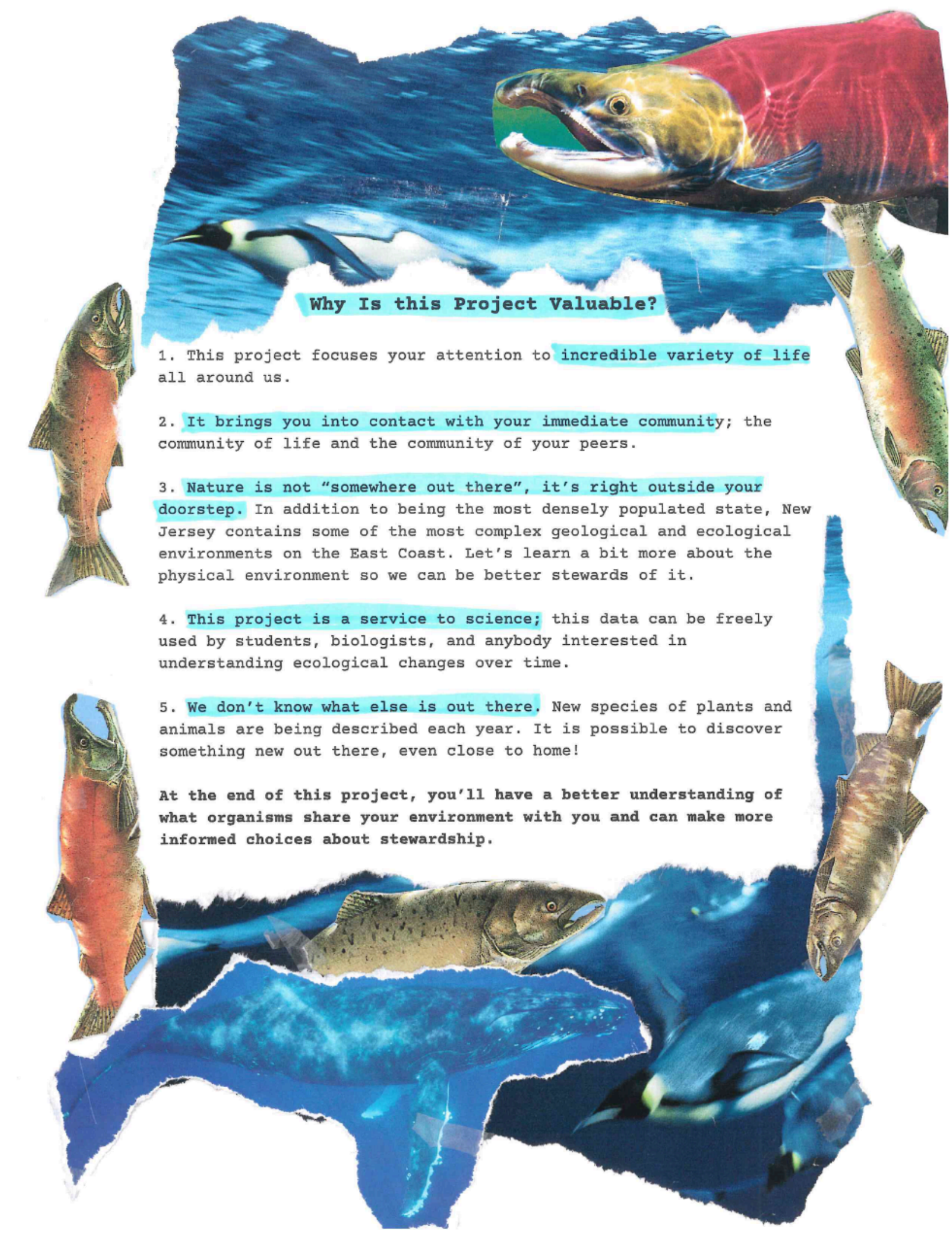
How Can I Play?

1. Sign up at iNaturalist.org
2. Join our project (Scan the QR code) or go to www.inaturalist.org/projects/bergen-backyard-bioblitz
3. Start making observations!
 - a. At home play: Leave a part of your yard unmowed and photograph any and all wild living things you can find in and around that area all month. If playing at home you can set your geoprivacy to "obscured" to anonymize your location.
 - b. Public play: Document organisms living in local and county parks. Your geoprivacy can stay "open" at a public place.
 - c. A combination of at home and public
4. All of your observations are tallied automatically and we will share the results at the end of the month.

Tools needed: A smartphone and iNaturalist account

Winning Conditions: Most observations / Most species observed.





Why Is this Project Valuable?

1. This project focuses your attention to incredible variety of life all around us.
2. It brings you into contact with your immediate community; the community of life and the community of your peers.
3. Nature is not "somewhere out there", it's right outside your doorstep. In addition to being the most densely populated state, New Jersey contains some of the most complex geological and ecological environments on the East Coast. Let's learn a bit more about the physical environment so we can be better stewards of it.
4. This project is a service to science; this data can be freely used by students, biologists, and anybody interested in understanding ecological changes over time.
5. We don't know what else is out there. New species of plants and animals are being described each year. It is possible to discover something new out there, even close to home!

At the end of this project, you'll have a better understanding of what organisms share your environment with you and can make more informed choices about stewardship.

How to Make an Observation?

An observation records an encounter with an organism at a particular time and location. When you make an observation, you'll record:

Evidence (Photo or sound)

What you saw

Where you saw it

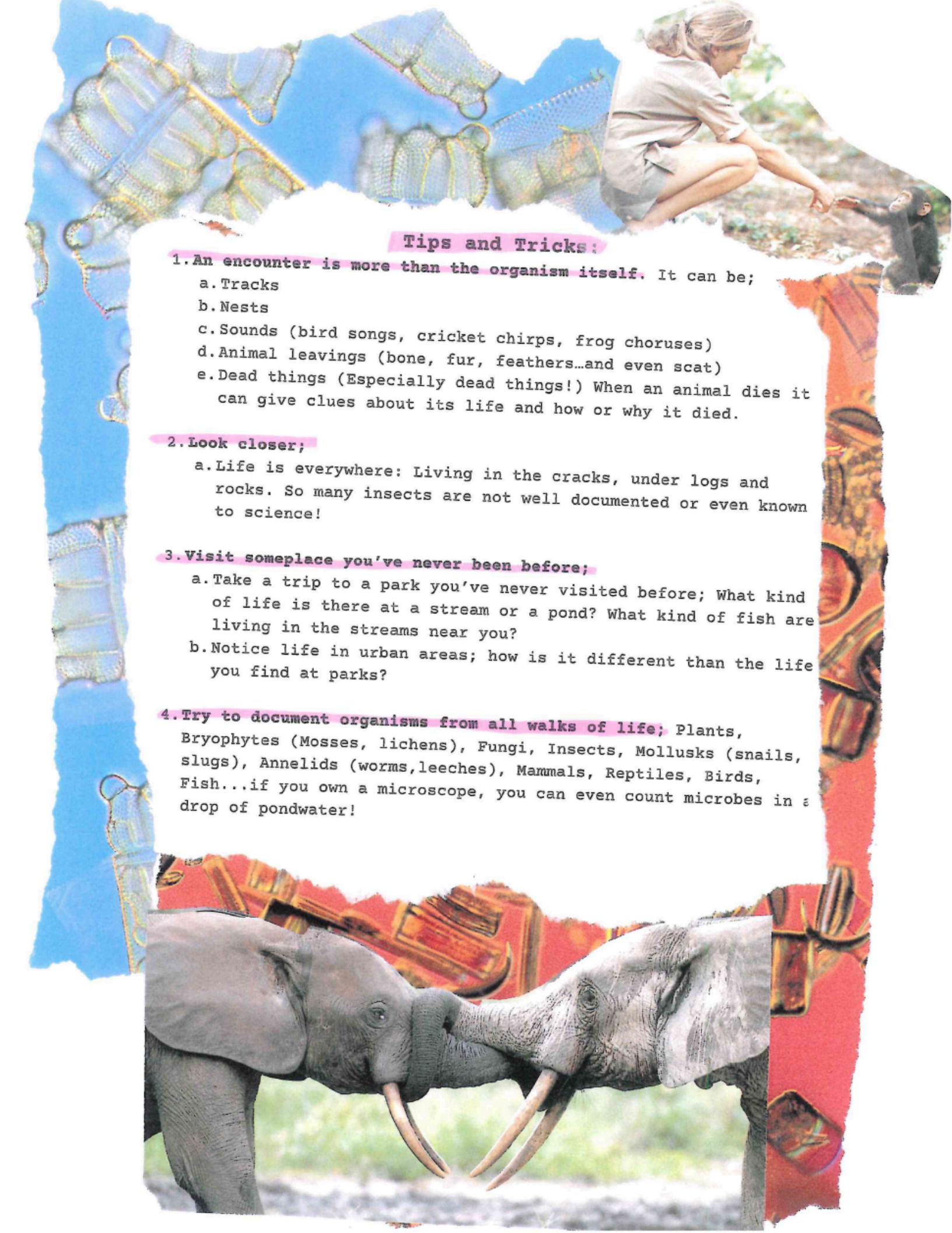
When you saw it

Who saw it (you)

If you observed something that is not wild, like a garden plant or a lion in the zoo, make sure to mark it as captive/cultivated to prevent it from becoming research quality.

More information:





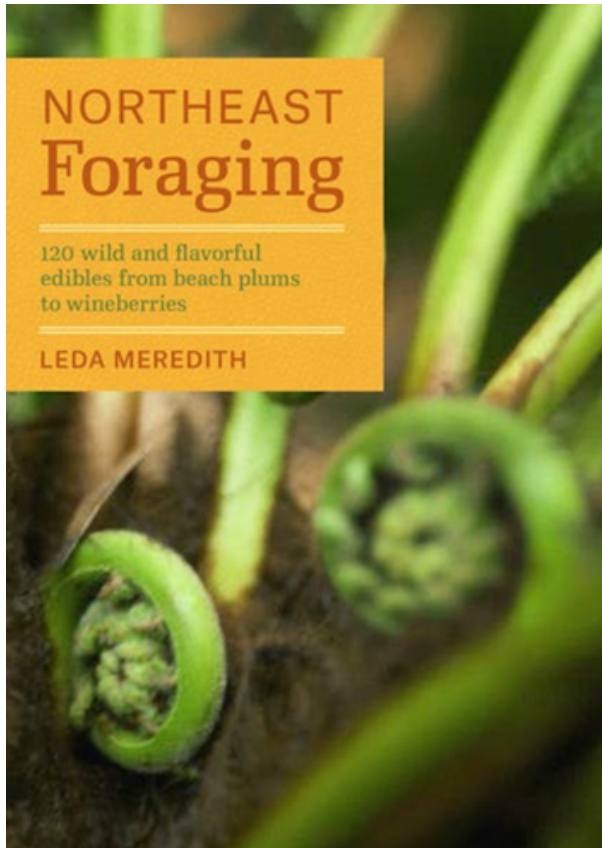
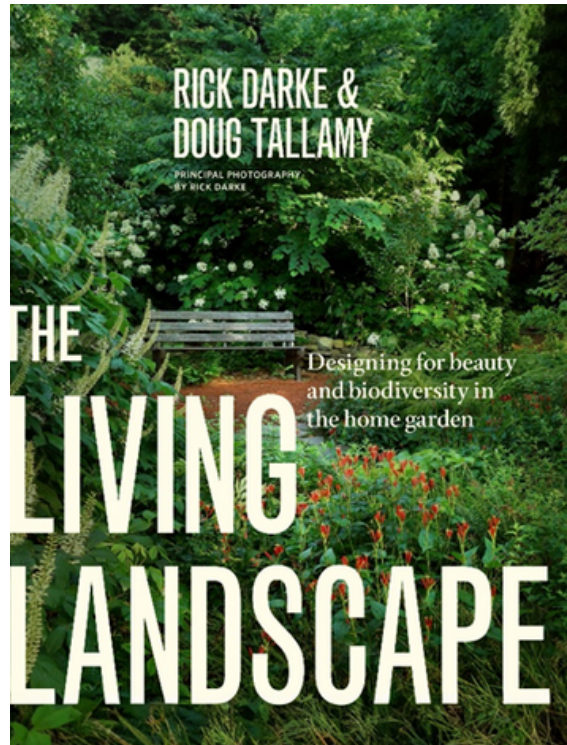
Tips and Tricks:

- 1. An encounter is more than the organism itself.** It can be;
 - a. Tracks
 - b. Nests
 - c. Sounds (bird songs, cricket chirps, frog choruses)
 - d. Animal leavings (bone, fur, feathers...and even scat)
 - e. Dead things (Especially dead things!) When an animal dies it can give clues about its life and how or why it died.
- 2. Look closer;**
 - a. Life is everywhere: Living in the cracks, under logs and rocks. So many insects are not well documented or even known to science!
- 3. Visit someplace you've never been before;**
 - a. Take a trip to a park you've never visited before; What kind of life is there at a stream or a pond? What kind of fish are living in the streams near you?
 - b. Notice life in urban areas; how is it different than the life you find at parks?
- 4. Try to document organisms from all walks of life;** Plants, Bryophytes (Mosses, lichens), Fungi, Insects, Mollusks (snails, slugs), Annelids (worms, leeches), Mammals, Reptiles, Birds, Fish...if you own a microscope, you can even count microbes in a drop of pondwater!



What Can You Win?

The Living Landscape, by Rick Darke and Doug Tallamy
Two of the most highly respected plantspersons in North America created *The Living Landscape*, Designing for beauty and biodiversity in the home garden, a gorgeous but practical guide to tending the land on which we garden. Rick Darke is a noted photographer, botanist and landscape ethicist. Doug Tallamy is Professor in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at University of Delaware. He's a leader in creating awareness of native plant species. **Georgie Kennedy**



Northeast Foraging, by Leda Meredith

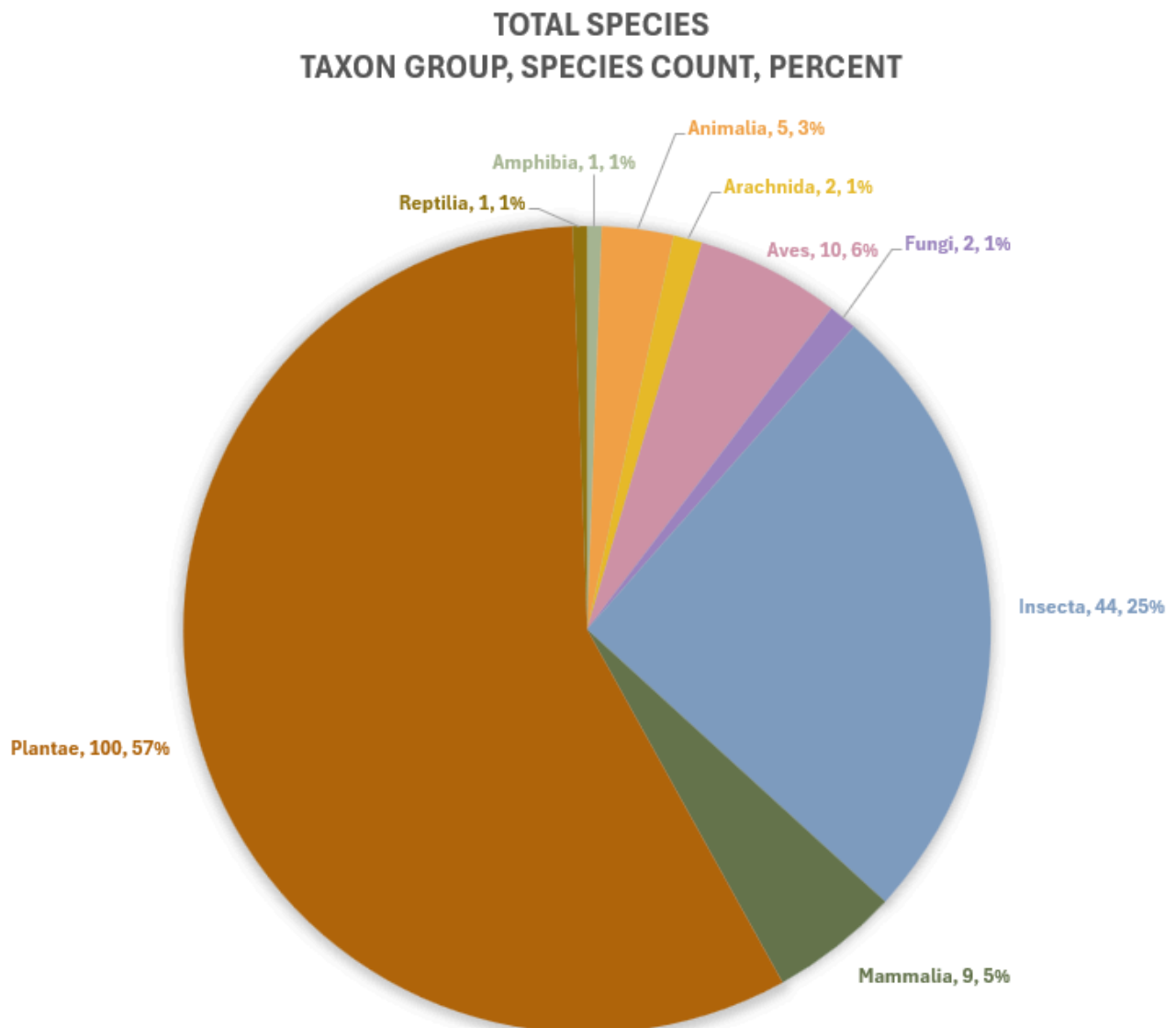
"An invaluable guide for the feast in the East. With Leda Meredith as your trusted guide you will learn how to safely find and identify an abundance of delicious wild plants. The plant profiles in *Northeast Foraging* include clear, color photographs, identification tips, guidance on how to ethically harvest, and suggestions for eating and preserving. A handy seasonal planner details which plants are available during every season. Thorough, comprehensive, and safe, this is a must-have for foragers in New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and Rhode Island." From the publisher.

Case Study: Roselle Park

By: Kristina Necovska

In 2023, I did a test study of this idea in Roselle Park (a very densely populated borough in Union County). How many different life forms were living in a very small suburban yard? It didn't seem like much space at all. The location was crammed between a railroad line and a busy street with a noisy auto body shop and other businesses competing for limited space. I didn't think I would find much - but I was so very wrong.

First, the results...175 species observed!



But out of all of these there was one very surprising find...

The Golden Northern Bumblebee

I am pretty familiar with the common eastern bumblebee but during this study I noticed something unusual... a bee I had never seen before.



The **Northern Golden Bumblebee, (Bombus fervidus)** is a species of North American bumblebee. In the eastern United States and Canada, the golden bumblebee is an important and highly efficient pollinator. It can pollinate up to 44 flowers in one minute!

Sadly, like many native bees the golden bumble bee is experiencing a **rapid decline** in its native habitat. This species is listed as endangered in many New England states, listed on the vulnerable list in New York and Pennsylvania and notably this species is not ranked for conservation yet in New Jersey. **And here it was, foraging in a clover between a Conrail line and an autobody shop.**

It is estimated that 49% of this species' population has been lost already. Besides reducing use of pesticides and herbicides, **you can help by planting a variety of regionally native wildflowers.** This species prefers to nest in grass, old mouse nests or on the surface of the ground. Its historic habitats consisted of **tall grass grasslands,** old meadows, prairies and other open grasslands.



It is a long tongued bee and its preferred forage are deep tubular flowers such as members of the pea family. It also likes Astragalus, Cirsium, Helianthus, Lonicera, Monarda, Penstemon, Trifolium, and Vicia (Williams et al. 2014).

Proof that you can find something very rare and special right living right under your nose!



Credits

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Citations:

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Bumble bees of North America: an Identification Guide. Princeton

University Press. 208 pp.



Go Play Outside