

## The best apps for nature lovers – from identifying birdsong to tracking lions

### Level 2: Intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

- a. Categorise the words below any way you like. Look up any words you don't know.

bunting   blackbird   constellation   fungi   kittiwake   lion   oak tree  
oyster   seagrass   star   temperate forest   tiger   tree monkey

- b. Add more words to each category.

#### 2 Key words

- a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. Then, complete the example sentence under each definition to use the words in context.

canopy   conservation   critter   fungi   gaze   meadow  
migrate   pollinator   prowl   track   sighting   rambler

1. A \_\_\_\_\_ is an occasion where you see something rare to see.  
*There were several \_\_\_\_\_ of elephants on this trail yesterday.*
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is the protection of plants and animals from the damaging effects of human activity.  
*This is a \_\_\_\_\_ area, so nobody is allowed to build here.*
3. \_\_\_\_\_ are types of organisms like mushrooms and mould that get their food from decaying material.  
\_\_\_\_\_ help trees talk to each other.
4. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a creature.  
*The only part I don't like about camping is the \_\_\_\_\_ that can come into your tent.*
5. A \_\_\_\_\_ is an animal like a bird or bug that carries pollen from one plant to another.  
*You can plant wildflowers in your garden to help create more ecosystems for \_\_\_\_\_.*

## The best apps for nature lovers – from identifying birdsong to tracking lions

### Level 2: Intermediate

6. To \_\_\_\_\_ is to follow an animal using electronic equipment or by looking for proof of where they have been.

*They have been \_\_\_\_\_ bird migrations for three years for their research project.*

7. To be on the \_\_\_\_\_ is to move around quietly, trying not to be seen or heard.

*A snow leopard on the \_\_\_\_\_ is almost impossible to spot since their coats blend into snow-covered rocks.*

8. To \_\_\_\_\_ is to travel to a new place when the season changes.

*Grey whales \_\_\_\_\_ south to calving lagoons in the winter months.*

9. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a field with grass and sometimes flowers in it.

*Look at that \_\_\_\_\_; it will make the perfect spot for a campsite.*

10. To \_\_\_\_\_ is to look at something for a long time.

*We lay on the cold rocks and \_\_\_\_\_ at the star-speckled sky for hours.*

11. A \_\_\_\_\_ is someone who enjoys long walks in the countryside.

*The lost dog was found by a passing \_\_\_\_\_, who took him to the nearest shelter.*

12. A \_\_\_\_\_ is the leaves and branches at the top of a group of trees that form a roof.

*Spider monkeys, sloths, and parrots all live in the \_\_\_\_\_ layer of the rainforest.*

## The best apps for nature lovers – from identifying birdsong to tracking lions

### Level 2: Intermediate

**Anna Turns**

**26 October, 2023**

1 With a phone in your hand, the world is your oyster, or bird, or oak tree. It's now possible to identify everything from mystery animal tracks to birdsong via an app. In addition, your sightings could contribute valuable information to scientific studies and conservation efforts worldwide. Here's how.

**2 Seek**

Perfect for curious kids who are keen to categorise the different plants, animals and fungi they find: take photos with your phone and Seek will identify the species and outline some key facts. From decomposers to urban nature or pond critters and pollinators, the app will suggest common species to look out for. The flagship iNaturalist app opens up access to a global community that can confirm logged observations.

*Free. iOS and Android*

**3 ChirpOMatic**

Identify songbirds with ChirpOMatic. Do you wish you could tell the difference between the call of a bunting and a blackbird? ChirpOMatic can help. Designed by scientists, this simple-to-use birdsong-recognition app has versions for western Europe, North America, the Caribbean and Australia.

*£3.99. iOS and Android*

**4 Animal Tracker**

Follow the movements of wild animals being tracked in real-time. From kittiwakes on the south Devon coast to lions on the prowl in Namibia, you can follow as they migrate, see past movements, or log your own sightings. Everything gets stored within the Movebank Research Database, a free online interactive mapping tool. Learn while contributing to a valuable citizen science resource for conservationists, rangers and researchers globally.

*Free. iOS and Android*

**5 eBird**

If, like many serious birders, you like a checklist, this app is for you. Available in 27 languages, eBird enables you to track your wild bird list by year, local path or however you decide. You can explore popular hotspots in your area and record sightings while you're on the move.

*Free. iOS and Android*

**6 LeafSnap**

Snap pics of unusual-looking plants in your flowerbeds and woodland to identify them. Just click on leaf, flower, fruit or bark to help the app categorise your plant, then LeafSnap will scan your image and show the closest matches. If more than one option is listed, it's up to you to compare and identify your plants. The paid-for version comes with extra features, including tips for plant care.

*Free or £3.59/month for ad-free version. iOS and Android*

**7 Seagrass Spotter**

If you're swimming, kayaking or diving among the coastal shallows, you might wonder what the grassy meadows beneath you are. App users can log sightings of seagrass anywhere in the world. The Seagrass Spotter makes it easy to tell which seagrass is which. You can even record an absence of seagrass – vulnerable to damage, being stepped on and polluting – providing data used by marine scientists to build a more accurate picture of seagrass distribution and help protect it.

**8 SkyView Lite**

Open a window onto the night sky – just point your tablet or smartphone camera up and you'll discover which stars or constellations you're gazing at. You'll know when the International Space Station is flying above you or be able to identify distant planets. It's also easy to use without Wi-Fi, so it's perfect for campers and remote rambles.

*Free. iOS and Android*

## The best apps for nature lovers – from identifying birdsong to tracking lions

### Level 2: Intermediate

#### 9 WWF Forests

This playful option is ideal if you're unable to get outside to experience nature first-hand. Using augmented virtual reality, the Forests app takes you on a tour of temperate forests from the comfort of your living room. By clicking on symbols as you move the screen around the room, you can uncover facts about forests, including what is threatening the wildlife living below the canopy. Tree monkeys and tigers appear at various stages of the journey, and eventually, you can construct your own forest.

© Guardian News and Media 2023

First published in *The Guardian*, 26/10/2023

## The best apps for nature lovers – from identifying birdsong to tracking lions

### Level 2: Intermediate

#### 3 Comprehension check

a. Decide if these statements are True (T), False (F), or Not Given (NG) according to the article. Correct any that are false.

1. Seek can help you identify different species of plants, animals, and fungi.
2. Seek will tell you what common species are in your area.
3. ChirpOMatic allows you to identify bird songs without Wi-Fi.
4. Animal Tracker lets you see wild animals' movements in real-time.
5. eBird's lists are not customisable.
6. As the name suggests, you can only use LeafSnap to identify leaves.
7. Seagrass allows you to record the presence or absence of seagrass along the coast.
8. SkyView Lite allows you to learn about stars, planets, and constellations, but you need a reliable internet connection.
9. WWF Forests allows you to take pictures of the forests you visit.
10. WWF Forests includes forest and wildlife facts.

#### 4 Key language

a. Match the verbs and nouns to form collocations from the text. Then, scan the text to see how they are used in context.

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| 1. contribute          | a. animals, fungi, plants, planets, species |
| 2. categorise/identify | b. facts                                    |
| 3. track               | c. information                              |
| 4. log / record        | d. nature                                   |
| 5. experience          | e. wild animals                             |
| 6. uncover             | f. your sightings                           |

## The best apps for nature lovers – from identifying birdsong to tracking lions

### Level 2: Intermediate

b. Complete the questions with verbs from the previous activity. Then, ask and answer the questions.

1. Which animals do you think are the most difficult to \_\_\_\_\_? What makes it so challenging?
2. When did you last \_\_\_\_\_ nature? Where were you?
3. Which app would allow you to \_\_\_\_\_ facts in the most enjoyable way?
4. Why is it essential for scientists to \_\_\_\_\_ animal's movements and behaviours?
5. Which plant or animal kingdom are you most interested in? How well can you \_\_\_\_\_ species?
6. Who has \_\_\_\_\_ the most to environmental sciences in your country? Can you name influential researchers or activists?

### 5 Discussion

a. Do you agree with these statements? Discuss your opinions.

- Even if you live in an urban environment, familiarising yourself with the plant and animal life around you is important.
- There's no need to go into nature when you can virtually experience nature on your electronic device.
- Environmental education is essential. When we learn more about the plants and animals around us, we want to care for them better.
- It is better for children to go on outdoor school trips than to use apps to learn about nature.

## The best apps for nature lovers – from identifying birdsong to tracking lions

### Level 2: Intermediate

#### 6 In your own words

a. Choose and download a nature app. Explore it and make notes.

- User-friendliness
- Features and functionality
- Educational content
- Quantity/Quality of logged data
- Community
- Playfulness
- Sharing options
- Price

b. Use your notes to write a review of the app.

What can the app be used for? What are its best features?

Why do you recommend it to others?

#### Useful language

*Do you wish you could ...? This app can help.*

*Perfect for those who ... / This app is ideal if you ...*

*If you like ..., this app is for you.*

*You can ... / The app allows you to... / The app makes it easy to ...*

*The paid-for version comes with/without ...*