



Red-juice Tooth (*Hydnellum peckii*), [ipcolo](#), some rights reserved, CC BY-NC.



Rocky Mountain Blue Columbine (*Aquilegia saximontana*), Vulnerable in Colorado, [pkrening](#), some rights reserved, CC BY-NC.



Pinesap (*Monotropa hypopitys*), Vulnerable in Colorado, [tom_mckinnon](#), some rights reserved, CC BY-NC.

January EcoQuest: Make the Grade

iNaturalist has unwrapped the [Year in Review](#) 2025, showcasing highlights and scientific triumphs from the year. We'd like to take a moment to celebrate our Denver-Boulder metro community by sharing local statistics and photos.

For the Denver EcoFlora project, in 2025 we contributed 138,862 total observations, nearly 48,000 more observations than last year! We spotted 1,461 plant species and 296 fungi and lichen species, for 1,757 total research-grade species observed in the area. Thirty-three of those species are listed as threatened, vulnerable, or endangered. Additionally, 185 research grade species were found that had not been observed previously in the Denver EcoFlora project, which started in 2020. Kudos to the over 7,000 observers and 1,900 identifiers who made this possible!

Despite this achievement, over 83,000 observations are eagerly awaiting their research-grade gold star (over 60%)! In fact, of all the Denver EcoFlora project observations, 47% have not made research grade status. This month let's work together to practice our identification skills by reviewing these observations so they can make the grade!

To achieve research grade, two or more reviewers must agree on the same species name. Once they've made the grade, these observations are uploaded to the [Global Biodiversity Information Facility](#) (GBIF) database of over 1 billion biodiversity records. Your observations can then be used by researchers worldwide to better understand topics such as the past and potential spread of invasive species, the influence of climate change on biodiversity, the role of rare species in protecting critical ecosystem functions, and the identification of priority areas for plant conservation.

You can also use this opportunity to hone your plant and fungal identification skills. Pick a few species – maybe your favorite wildflowers, or a group that's piqued your curiosity. Learn the characteristics of them and then apply this knowledge to the Denver EcoFlora observations. From the project page on [iNaturalist](#), simply click on "Observations" and then "[Identify](#)." You can narrow this list down by entering a specific species in the search box. We can't wait to see how many observations make the grade!

What is an EcoQuest?

EcoQuests, part of the Denver EcoFlora project, challenge citizens to become citizen scientists and observe, study and conserve the native plants of the City via iNaturalist, an easy-to-use mobile app.

How Do I Get Started?

1. Download the iNaturalist app or register online at [iNaturalist.org](#).
2. Take photos of the plants in bloom that you find on your daily neighborhood walk. It is ok if they are weeds! But avoid taking photos of cultivated plants in gardens or in your home.

3. If you are concerned about revealing the location of sensitive organisms or observations at your own house, you can hide the exact location from the public by changing the "geoprivacy" of the observation to "obscured."
4. Post your findings on iNaturalist via the app.
5. Your observations will automatically be added to the [Denver EcoFlora Project](#).
6. You can add an identification to your photo when you post your findings on iNaturalist, or leave it blank for others to identify.

What is the Goal?

The EcoFlora project is designed to meaningfully connect citizens with biodiversity, and to assemble novel observations and data on the metro area's flora to better inform policy decisions and conservation strategies.



Photo by Scott Dressel-Martin