

iSpot: Sharing nature



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Introduction

This course provides access to the [iSpot website](#), where you can share your observations of wildlife, whether these are descriptions or photographs.

iSpot is a social networking site that was created to encourage people to engage with nature. It is designed in a way that allows 'beginners' to connect with a supportive community of experts and others.

In this video Chris Packham introduces iSpot and how it can help you learn about wildlife.

View at: [youtube:VQIWT1A1eLE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQIWT1A1eLE)

Chris Packham introduces iSpot

This OpenLearn course provides a sample of Level 1 study in [Science](#).

Learning Outcomes

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- engage with the local natural environment
- take part in observing nature
- understand more about classification in the natural world
- communicate with a wider community
- use ICT to record any findings.

Using iSpot

Whatever your age, iSpot is the ideal place to learn more about wildlife and to share your interest with a supportive community. iSpot allows you to look at observations made by others, learn about how these have been classified and add your own comments and advice. You can share your own observations and receive advice from a wider community on how to classify them.

View at: [youtube:jYH8dQr4Lig](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jYH8dQr4Lig)

Find out how iSpot community works.

So what's it all about?

iSpot is a website that aims to help anyone identify anything in nature. The best place to start is to look at some of the latest observations – you can see what people are observing right now. Anyone can see what's on the site without registering. Go to the [homepage](#) and click on the photos for the latest observations, or on the species-group icons just below. If you register, you can add an observation to the website and suggest an identification yourself or invite others to identify it for you. You can also help others by adding an identification to an existing observation, which you may like to do as your knowledge grows.

Your reputation on the site will grow as people agree with your identifications. You may also like to visit our forums which offer lively debate around observations and other more general topics. In this video Jonathan Silvertown introduces iSpot and how it can help you learn about wildlife.

View at: [youtube:55N3Ca22FKY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55N3Ca22FKY)

Getting started

To get involved in iSpot you'll need to register on the site. Registering is free and only requires a user name, email address and password. Watch the video on how to register, then [sign up to iSpot](#). (Right-click on the link to open it in a new window or tab.)

View at: [youtube:XI-M8PcVgcc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XI-M8PcVgcc)

Find out how to register for iSpot.

The next thing to do is to get outside and make some observations. You need to note down what you've seen, where you've seen it, and when you saw it. If you can take a digital photograph of it that is very helpful, and allows others to share what you've seen.

For help and advice on what to spot, where to see it, and how to identify it, go to the top of the page and click on the [groups menu](#) and select which of the eight iSpot wildlife groups you are interested in.

Adding observations, images and locations to iSpot

Observations are the main thing on the site. To make an observation, you need to provide:

- a photo and/or description of your observation
- where you saw it (the location)
- when you saw it (date)
- what you saw (the identification, if you are able to suggest one – this is optional)

View at: [youtube:Uo8KbuRX424](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uo8KbuRX424)

Find out how to add an observation on iSpot.

If you don't have a photograph you can describe what you saw in as much detail as possible, including size, colour, behaviour etc. You can make observations simply by clicking on the 'Add an observation' button. Follow the guidance to add details of your observation and upload any photos that you have. (Look out for the small grey question marks – click on these for extra guidance.) You don't have to complete all the boxes on the page, but it can help get a good identification if you give as much information as possible. If you want to see all the observations you have made so far, go to 'My Spot' and choose the 'Observations' tab towards the top of the page.

Identification

If you add an identification to your observation, use the list of names via the 'Get recommended' button, which will make sure your name is matched to a species dictionary whenever possible. This will ensure your observation is placed in the correct group on iSpot, and means that you will be able to see any other observations of the same species. See [iSpot etiquette](#) for more information about the identification process.

Location

When you add an observation you are asked to give the location for the observation. You can create a new location or if it is a location you've used before you can start typing in its name and it will appear. (You can see your existing Locations by going to 'My Spot' and choosing the 'Map' tab towards the top of the page.) If you are creating a new location, it is possible to type in the latitude and longitude if you know them, but most people click on the 'Use map' button, which allows you to find your location on a map, searching by place name, postcode or grid reference. When you have found the location you want, click it on the map, then click 'Done'.

Note that when you set up a location, you can choose to hide its precise point on the map. If you tick the option to 'Hide precise location' it will be displayed on iSpot as a 1km grid square, and other users will not be able to see the precise location. This might be useful for your home address for example.

Exploring iSpot

As well as posting your own observations, it's good to see what other people are observing, and to help them with identifications too. The latest observations are always displayed on the home page, or you can see them [listed with more details](#), or you can see them as a [gallery of thumbnail images](#). The list and gallery can also be found from the Observations menu. You can also get involved via the eight wildlife groups, see [Groups menu](#) where there is more information about the various types of wildlife.

You can see what's new on iSpot by using 'My unread', a great way of keeping up with observations and comments, available from the 'My Spot' menu.

[iSpot Keys](#) are easy to use tools that allow you to use your computer or mobile to identify wildlife. Simply describe your specimen using as many characters as you can and the keys will suggest the best match for what you have found. Have a look also at the 'Changes' area of My Spot, which allows you to track anything that's been added or changed on the observations to which you've contributed.

Another way of keeping track of any observations that interest you is to 'Add to favourites'. You can always see what is in your favourites list by going to 'My favourites'.

Conclusion

This free course provided an introduction to studying Science. It took you through a series of exercises designed to develop your approach to study and learning at a distance and helped to improve your confidence as an independent learner.

Keep on learning



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Acknowledgements

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