

naturbeobachtung.at

Since 2006, a wide variety of nature observations can be reported on naturbeobachtung.at. Specially designed reporting masks for different groups of animals, plants and fungi allow detailed entries. The reporters can, as far as possible, identify their observations taxonomically or report them as "undetermined species". The latter can then be subsequently identified by the community. Optionally, more precise reports are possible, e.g. with weather data or a detailed description of the site including site photos. Uploading photos of specimens is explicitly encouraged (and mandatory in the app, which also provides mobile access to naturbeobachtung.at). The possibility to upload "picture series" of an observed individual makes it much easier for the experts to check the reports, especially for species that are difficult to identify.

Discussion forum

A special highlight of the web version is the highly frequented discussion forum - with over 200,000 text contributions from more than 35,000 discussions. Here, reporters can exchange information with other nature enthusiasts, show their most beautiful nature photographs or ask experts for identification help.

App as a supplement to the web version

In 2018, the web version was expanded to include a free app for smartphones with the same name. Reporting via the app is simple, straightforward and fast: images (Exif data) and GPS data "automatically" provide all relevant data that are important for reporting an observation. The reports from the web and app are synchronized and can therefore always be viewed "in real time" on all devices.

What happens to the reports?

All reports are checked regularly by experts, usually daily during periods of activity. For reports with already assigned species name, the determination is checked and evaluated as "confirmed", "plausible", "doubtful" or "wrong". If the species name has not yet been assigned, the expert "determines" the species. If the reporter was only able to assign the observation to one species group, experts have the possibility to "specify" the finding on species level. The reporters are automatically informed of the result of the data check or determination - via email in the web application, via push message in the app.

Who checks the data?

More than 50 experts from all biological disciplines provide naturbeobachtung.at with their expertise. Most of them are volunteer experts from universities, museums or technical offices. In the course of time, more and more "amateur experts" - non-professionals with profound knowledge of species - have been granted data validation authorization on the platform. The introduction of people to scientific activities is a declared goal of Citizen Science projects!

What has happened so far (as of March 2021)

To date, 600,000 observations have been reported by 11,000 contributors and more than 460,000 photos have been uploaded. The data obtained are used for further conservation measures and provide an excellent basis for current scientific work.

The most common examples for the use of observation data from naturbeobachtung.at are master and doctoral theses as well as scientific publications. However, observation data are also forwarded to various institutions: For example, mammal data from Upper Austria were made available to the Landesmuseum Oberösterreich in 2020 for the "Distribution Atlas of Mammals in Upper Austria", which is currently in progress; find data on selected animal groups in Styria were used in the compilation of the "Red Lists of Styria"; and plant observations from Salzburg are included in the biodiversity database at the Haus der Natur.

In this way, the Naturschutzbund with its Citizen Science platform naturbeobachtung.at significantly supports biodiversity research in Austria! Join us - as a nature observer or expert!