

CITIZEN SCIENCE FOR PLANT IDENTIFICATION: INSIGHTS FROM PL@NTNET

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universitaire
de France**



Mainly joint work with:

Tanguy Lefort	(Univ. Montpellier, IMAG)
Benjamin Charlier	(Univ. Montpellier, IMAG)
Camille Garcin	(Univ. Montpellier, IMAG)
Maximilien Servajean	(Univ. Paul-Valéry-Montpellier, LIRMM, Univ. Montpellier)
Alexis Joly	(Inria, LIRMM, Univ. Montpellier)

and:



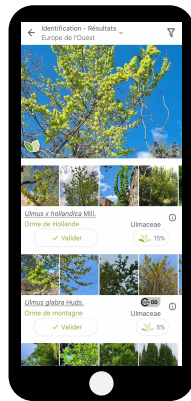
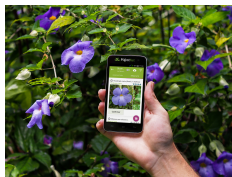
Pierre Bonnet	(CIRAD, AMAP)
Antoine Affouard, J-C. Lombardo, Titouan Lorieul, Mathias Chouet	(Inria, LIRMM, Univ. Montpellier)

CURRENT MAIN RESEARCH TOPIC

ML FOR CITIZEN SCIENCE / PL@NTNET



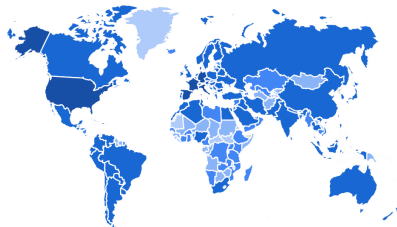
A **citizen science** platform using machine learning to help people identify plants with their mobile phones



- ▶ Website: <https://plantnet.org/>
- ▶ Note: no mushroom identification!



- ▶ Start in 2011, now **25M+ users**
- ▶ **200+** countries
- ▶ Up to **2M** image uploaded/day
- ▶ **50K** species
- ▶ **1B+** total images
- ▶ **10M+** labeled / validated



<https://identify.plantnet.org/stats>

Personal Usage



Nature, walks



Gardening



Phytotherapy

Professional Usage



Agro-ecology



Natural Areas Management



Education, animation

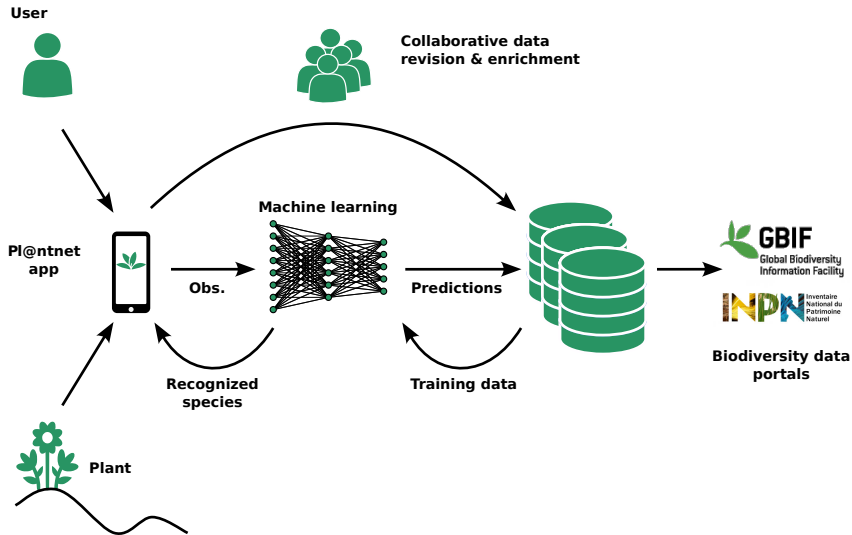


Tourism

Trade

KEY CONCEPT OF PL@NTNET

COOPERATIVE LEARNING





Pl@nNet description

Contributions

Dataset release for the community: **Pl@ntNet - 300K**

Aggregating votes



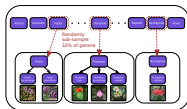
Motivation: an excellent ... but not a perfect app; **How to improve?**

- ▶ Community effort: machine learning, ecology, engineering, amateurs
- ▶ Many open problems (theoretical/practical)
- ▶ Need for methodological/computational breakthrough

PERSONAL ASSOCIATED CONTRIBUTIONS (MOSTLY METHODOLOGICAL)



- ▶ Pl@ntNet-300K⁽¹⁾:
Creation and **release** of a large-scale dataset sharing the same property as Pl@ntNet; available for the community to improve learning systems



⁽¹⁾ C. Garcin, A. Joly, et al. (2021). "Pl@ntNet-300K: a plant image dataset with high label ambiguity and a long-tailed distribution". *Proceedings of the Neural Information Processing Systems Track on Datasets and Benchmarks*.

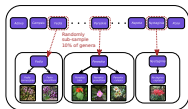
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- ▶ **Learning & crowd-sourced data⁽²⁾**:
How to leverage multiple labels per image to improve the model? Need to **assert quality**: the workers, the images/labels, the model, etc.



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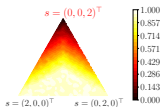
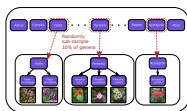
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- ▶ $Pl@ntNet-300K^{(1)}$:
Creation and **release** of a large-scale dataset sharing the same property as $Pl@ntNet$; available for the community to improve learning systems
- ▶ Learning & crowd-sourced data⁽²⁾:
How to leverage multiple labels per image to improve the model? Need to **assert quality**: the workers, the images/labels, the model, etc.
- ▶ Top-K learning⁽³⁾:
Driven by theory, introduce new losses to cope with $Pl@ntNet$ constraints to **output multiple labels** (such as user experience, Deep Learning framework, etc.)



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Popular datasets limitations:

- ▶ structure of label too simplistic (CIFAR-10, CIFAR-100)
- ▶ might be too clean (tasks easy to discriminate)
- ▶ might be too well-balanced (same number of images per class)

Motivation:

release a large-scale dataset **sharing similar features** as the Pl@ntNet dataset to foster research in plant identification \implies Pl@ntNet-300K⁽⁴⁾

⁽⁴⁾ C. Garcin, A. Joly, et al. (2021). "Pl@ntNet-300K: a plant image dataset with high label ambiguity and a long-tailed distribution". *Proceedings of the Neural Information Processing Systems Track on Datasets and Benchmarks*.

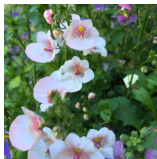


ASYMETRY OF ERRORS IN PL@NTNET

INTRA-CLASS VARIABILITY: SAME LABEL/SPECIES BUT VERY DIVERSE IMAGES



*Guizotia
abyssinica*



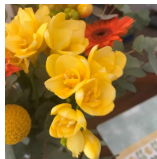
*Diascia
rigescens*



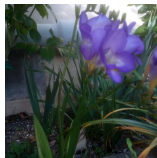
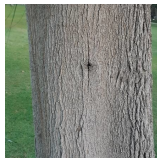
*Lapageria
rosea*



*Casuarina
cunninghamiana*



*Freesia
alba*



Based on pictures only, plant species are challenging to discriminate!

ASYMETRY OF ERRORS IN PL@NTNET

INTER-CLASS AMBIGUITY: DIFFERENT SPECIES BUT SIMILAR IMAGES



Cirsium rivulare



Chaerophyllum aromaticum



Conostomium kenysense



Adenostyles leucophylla



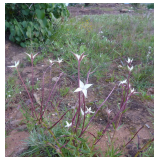
Sedum montanum



Cirsium tuberosum



Chaerophyllum temulum



Conostomium quadrangulare



Adenostyles alliarie

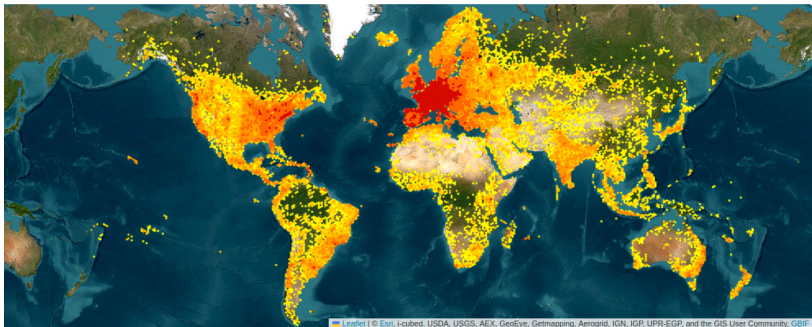


Sedum rupestre

Some species are visually similar (especially within genus)



Spatial density of images collected by Pl@ntNet:



Top-5 most observed plant species in Pl@ntNet:



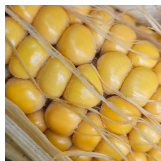
(a) *Echium vulgare* L.
25 134 observations



(b) *Ranunculus ficaria* L.
24 720 observations



(c) *Prunus spinosa* L.
24 103 observations



(d) *Zea mays* L.
23 288 observations



(e) *Alliaria petiolata*
23 075 observations

10 753 observations



Centaurea jacea

VS.

6 observations

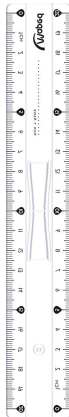


Cenchrus agrimonioides

8 376 observations



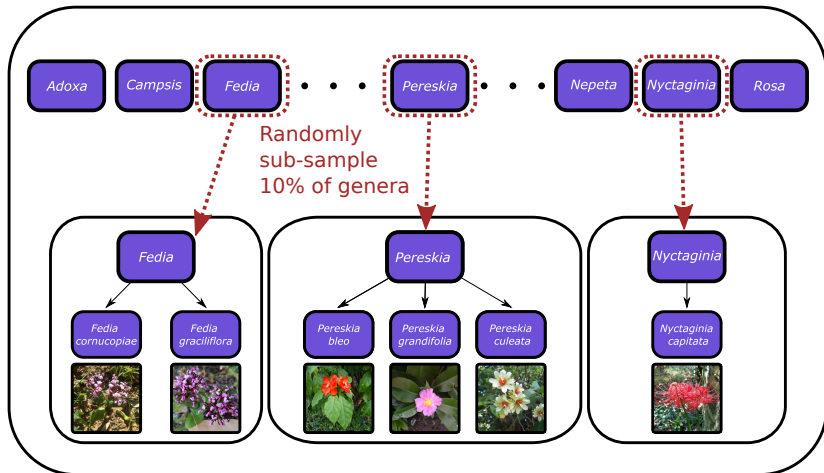
Magnolia grandiflora



413 observations



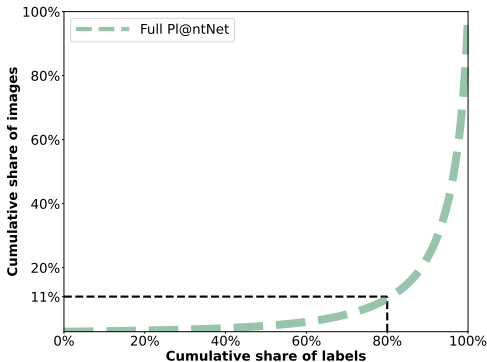
Moehringia trinervia



Sample at genus level to preserve intra-genus ambiguity
(use hierarchical structure)

LONG TAILED DISTRIBUTION

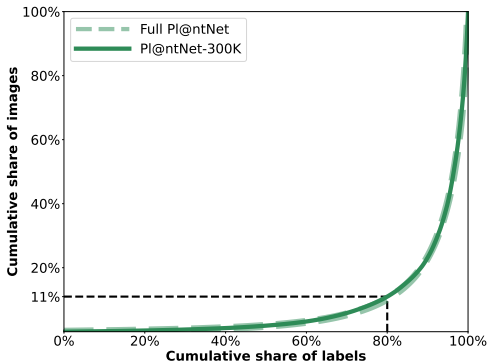
PRESERVED WITH SUBSAMPLING OF GENERA



80% of species | 11% of images \iff 20% of species | 89% of images

LONG TAILED DISTRIBUTION

PRESERVED WITH SUBSAMPLING OF GENERA



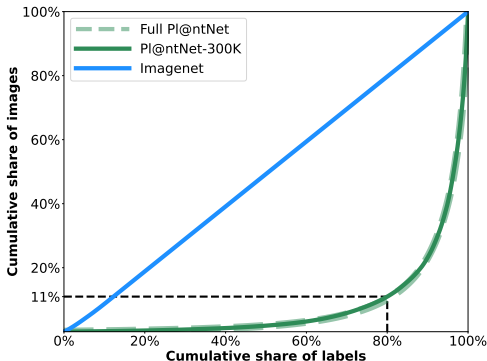
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Reminder:

- ▶ Pl@ntNet-300K: 1K+ species
- ▶ Pl@ntNet: 50K+ species
- ▶ Earth: 300K+ species

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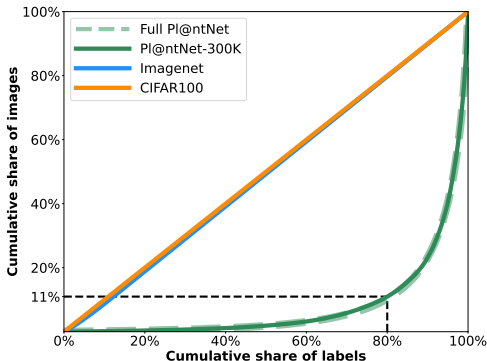
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- ▶ 306 146 color images
- ▶ 32 GB
- ▶ Labels: $K = 1\,081$ species
- ▶ 2 079 003 volunteers "workers"

Zenodo, 1 click download

<https://zenodo.org/record/5645731>

Code to train models:

<https://github.com/plantnet/PlantNet-300K>



Pl@nNet description

Aggregating votes

Vote in Pl@ntNet

Weighted Majority Vote (WMV)

Dataset release for the community: **Pl@ntNet South Western European flora**

PL@NTNET ONLINE VOTES

<https://identify.plantnet.org/weurope/observations/>



161258659

× *Chitalpa tashkentensis* T.S.Elias & Wisura World flora

Observation



pofpof63
Jun 26, 2023

1: user and date



Most probable name

× *Chitalpa tashkentensis* T.S.Elias & Wisura
Bignoniaceae Dave

2: votes

Submitted name

× *Chitalpa tashkentensis* T.S.Elias & Wisura

Suggested names Vote for the species name

× *Chitalpa tashkentensis* T.S.Elias & Wisura Dave 👍 5



Species name (World flora)



Vote

Badly determined observation? Vote for Undetermined species

⚠️ Observation contains pictures of several plants?: Vote for Malformed observation 0





- ▶ Images taken by users ... so are the labels!
- ▶ But users can be wrong, or not experts
- ▶ Several labels can be available!

Vesalea grandifolia (Villarreal) Hua Feng Wang & Landrein Flore mondiale Observation

 Pavlos
16 sept. 2023









Nom le plus probable

Vesalea grandifolia (Villarreal) Hua Feng Wang & Landrein
Caprifoliaceae Abélia

Nom soumis

Zabelia triflora (R.Br. ex Wall.) Makino ex Hisauti & H.Hara

Noms suggérés Voter pour le nom d'espèce

- Vesalea grandifolia* (Villarreal) Hua Feng Wang & L...  3 
- Zabelia triflora* (R.Br. ex Wall.) Makino ex Hisauti &...  1 
- Espèce non identifiée  1 

 Espèce (Flore mondiale)  Voter

Observation mal déterminée ? Votez pour Espèce indéterminée



Voter pour un organe



Corrected initial
submission

BUT SOMETIMES USERS CAN'T BE TRUSTED

<https://identify.plantnet.org/weurope/observations/>



Espèce non identifiée Flore mondiale

Observation

 Ernst Fürst
23 janv. 2022



Nom le plus probable

Espèce non identifiée

Nom soumis

Plantago subulata L.

Noms suggérés

Voter pour le nom d'espèce

- Plantago subulata* L. Plantain à feuilles en alène  5 
- Espèce non identifiée  2 
- Polytrichum commune Hedw.  2 
- Polytrichum commune  1 



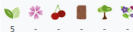
Espèce (Flore mondiale)



Voter



Voter pour un organe



5

Voter pour la qualité

Corrected ?

BUT SOMETIMES USERS CAN'T BE TRUSTED

<https://identify.plantnet.org/weurope/observations/>



Espèce non identifiée Flore mondiale

Observation



Nom le plus probable

Espèce non identifiée

Nom soumis

Plantago subulata L.

Noms suggérés Voter pour le nom d'espèce

- | | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| <i>Plantago subulata</i> L. Plantain à feuilles en aîné | 👍 5 | 👤 3 |
| Espèce non identifiée | 👍 2 | 👤 2 |
| Polytrichum commune Hedw. | 👍 2 | 👤 2 |
| Polytrichum commune | 👍 1 | 👤 1 |

Contributeurs

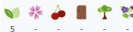


Majority is wrong

Fermer



Voter pour un organe



Voter pour la qualité



General.

- ▶ The good: Fast, easy, cheap data collection



General.

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- ▶ The bad: Noisy labels with different levels of expertise



General.

- ▶ The good: Fast, easy, cheap data collection
- ▶ The bad: Noisy labels with different levels of expertise
- ▶ The ugly: (partly) missing theory, ad-hoc methods for noisy labels

▶ Classes/labels/species: $k \in \{ \text{flower icons} \} \triangleq [K]$

▶ Images collected: $x_i \in \{ \text{image thumbnails} \} \triangleq \mathcal{X}_{\text{train}}$

▶ Users/labelers: $u \in \{ \text{user icons} \} \triangleq [n_{\text{user}}]$

▶ Labels given by u to x_i : $y_i^u \triangleq \{ \text{label icon, image icon} \} \in \{ \text{flower icons} \}$

▶ Users labeling x_i : $\mathcal{U}(x_i) \triangleq \{ \text{user icons, image icons} \}$



Provide for all images x_i an aggregated label \hat{y}_i based on the votes y_i^u of the workers $u \in \mathcal{U}$.

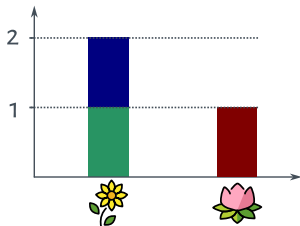
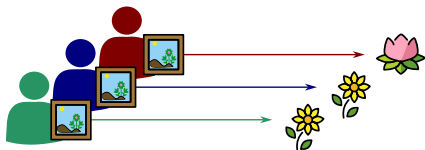


Naive idea:

make users vote and take the most voted label for each image

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make users vote and take the most voted label for each image



$$\text{Result : } \hat{y}^{\text{MV}} = \text{Yellow flower}$$

Definition: Majority Voting (MV)

Majority Voting outputs the most answered label:

$$\forall x_i \in \mathcal{X}_{\text{train}}, \hat{y}_i^{\text{MV}} = \arg \max_{k \in [K]} \left(\sum_{u \in \mathcal{U}(x_i)} \mathbb{1}_{\{y_i^u = k\}} \right)$$

Properties:

- ✓ simple
- ✓ adapted for any number of users
- ✓ usually efficient, often few labelers sufficient (say⁽⁵⁾ <5)
- ✗ ineffective for borderline cases
- ✗ suffer from spammers / adversarial users

⁽⁵⁾ R. Snow et al. (2008). "Cheap and Fast - But is it Good? Evaluating Non-Expert Annotations for Natural Language Tasks". *Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing*. EMNLP 2008. Association for Computational Linguistics, pp. 254–263.



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Constraints: wide range of skills, different levels of expertise

Modeling aspect: add a user weight to balance votes

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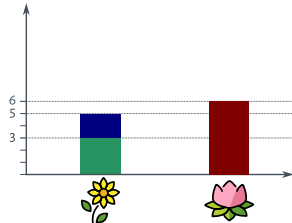
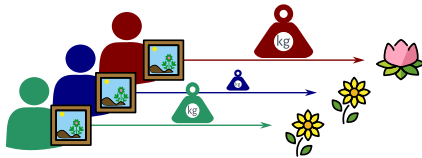
Modeling aspect: add a user weight to balance votes



Let us assume $(w_u)_{u \in \mathcal{U}}$ given for now

WEIGHTED MAJORITY VOTE (WMV)

EXAMPLE



Result : $\hat{y}^{\text{WMV}} =$ 

Definition: label confidence

The label confidence $\text{conf}_i(k)$ of label k for image x_i is the sum of the weights of the workers who voted for k :

$$\forall k \in [K], \quad \text{conf}_i(k) = \sum_{u \in \mathcal{U}(x_i)} w_u \mathbb{1}_{\{y_i^u = k\}}$$

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Size effect:

- ▶ more votes \Rightarrow more confidence
- ▶ more expertise \Rightarrow more confidence

Definition: label accuracy

The label accuracy $\text{acc}_i(k)$ of label k for image x_i is the normalized sum of weights of the workers who voted for k :

$$\forall k \in [K], \quad \text{acc}_i(k) = \text{conf}_i(k) / \sum_{k' \in [K]} \text{conf}_i(k')$$

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Interpretation: only the proportion of the weights matters



Definition: Weighted Majority Voting (WMV)

Majority voting but weighted by a confidence score per user u :

$$\forall x_i \in \mathcal{X}_{\text{train}}, \quad \hat{y}_i^{\text{WMV}} = \arg \max_{k \in [K]} \left(\sum_{u \in \mathcal{U}(x_i)} w_u \mathbb{1}_{\{y_i^u = k\}} \right)$$

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Note: the weights w_u can be computed from confidence or accuracy

$$\hat{y}_i^{\text{WMV}} = \arg \max_{k \in [K]} \left(\text{conf}_i(k) \right) = \arg \max_{k \in [K]} \left(\text{acc}_i(k) \right)$$



Suppose that you have a label estimate \hat{y}_i for x_i :



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Labels quality check: need for **expertise**

keep images with label confidence above a threshold θ_{conf} , validate \hat{y}_i when $\text{conf}_i(\hat{y}_i) > \theta_{\text{conf}}$



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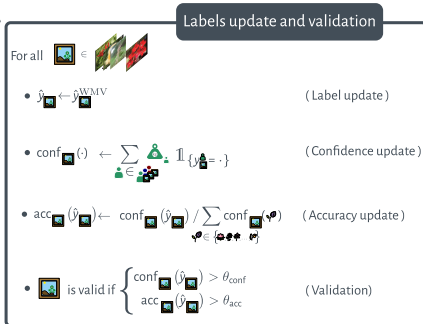
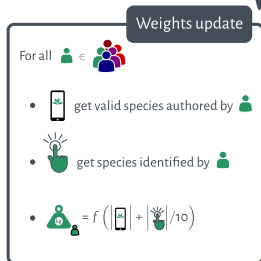
keep images with label confidence above a threshold θ_{conf} , validate \hat{y}_i when $\text{conf}_i(\hat{y}_i) > \theta_{\text{conf}}$

Agreement check: need for **consensus**

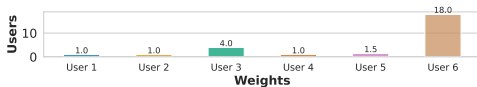
keep images with label accuracy above a threshold θ_{acc} , validate \hat{y}_i when $\text{acc}_i(\hat{y}_i) > \theta_{\text{acc}}$

PL@NTNET LABEL AGGREGATION (EM ALGORITHM)

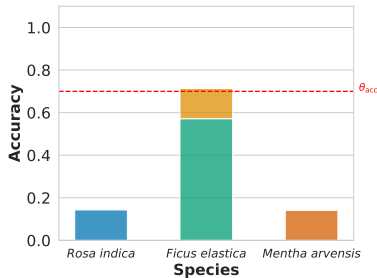
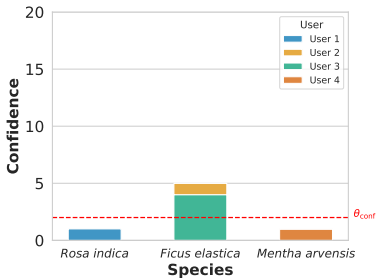
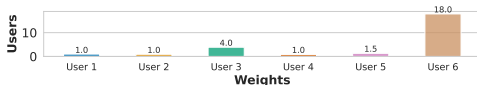
WEIGHT USER VOTE BY NUMBER OF IDENTIFICATIONS



- ▶ $n_{\text{user}} = 6, K = 3$: *Rosa indica*, *Ficus elastica*, *Mentha arvensis*
- ▶ $\theta_{\text{conf}} = 2$ and $\theta_{\text{acc}} = 0.7$
- ▶ Users weights as follows:

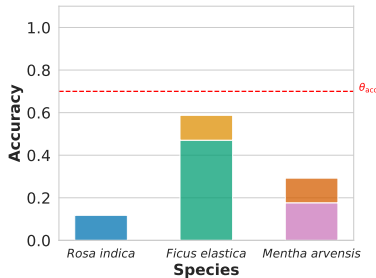
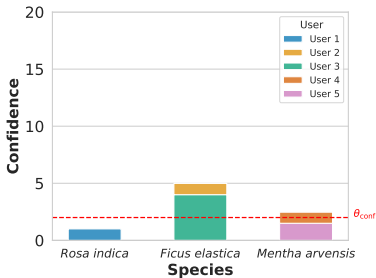
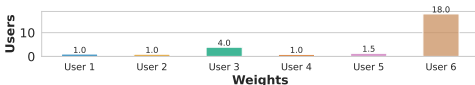


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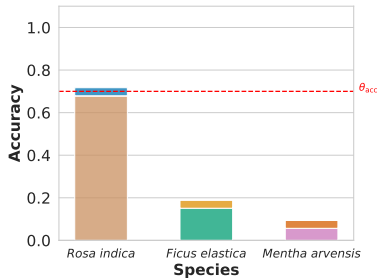
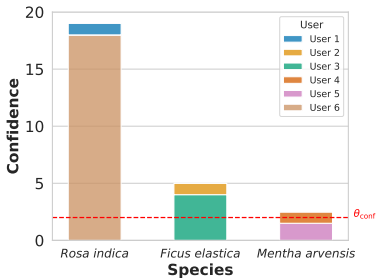
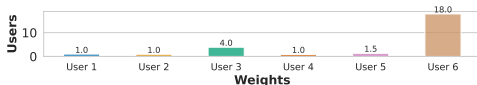
Take into account 4 users out of 6

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Invalidated label: Adding User 5 reduces accuracy

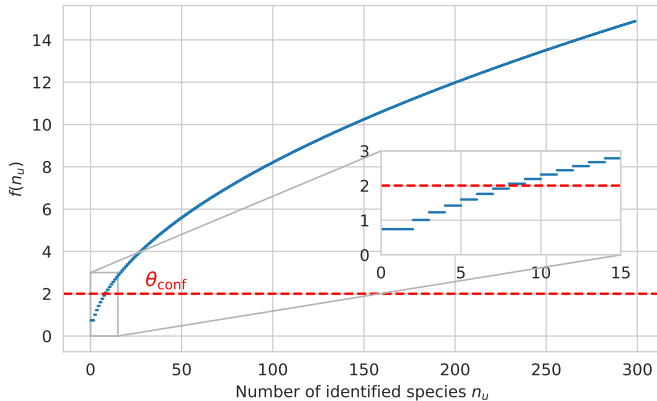
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Label switched: User 6 is an expert

$$f(n_u) = n_u^\alpha - n_u^\beta + \gamma \text{ with } \begin{cases} \alpha = 0.5 \\ \beta = 0.2 \\ \gamma = \log(1.7) \simeq 0.74 \end{cases}$$

Weight function determination





- ▶ **Majority Vote (MV)**



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- ▶ **Worker agreement with aggregate (WAWA)** (Appen 2021)
 - ▶ Majority vote
 - ▶ Weight users by how much they agree with the majority
 - ▶ Weighted majority vote



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- ▶ **TwoThrid** (iNaturalist)
 - ▶ Need 2 votes
 - ▶ 2/3 of agreements



Pl@nNet description

Aggregating votes

Vote in Pl@ntNet

Weighted Majority Vote (WMV)

Dataset release for the community: **Pl@ntNet South Western European flora**



- ▶ South Western European flora obs since 2017
- ▶ 800K users answered more than 11K+ species
- ▶ 9M+ votes casted
- ▶ **Imbalance:** 80% of observations are represented by 10% of total votes

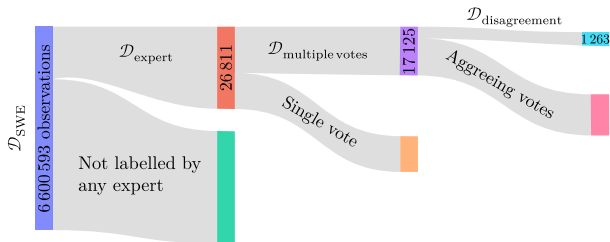


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No ground truth available to evaluate the strategies

- ▶ Extract 98 experts : Tela Botanica + prior knowledge (P. Bonnet)

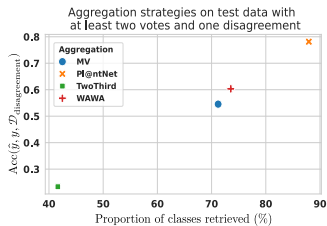
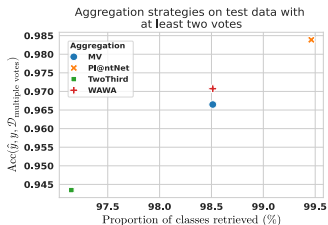
PL@ntnet South-Western Europe flora dataset

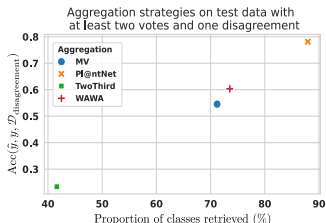
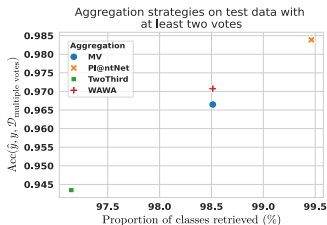


<https://zenodo.org/records/10782465>

PERFORMANCE

ACCURACY AND VOLUME OF CLASSES KEPT



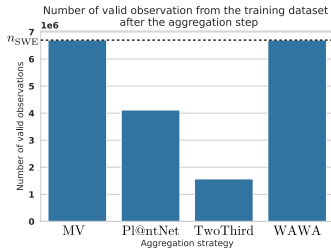
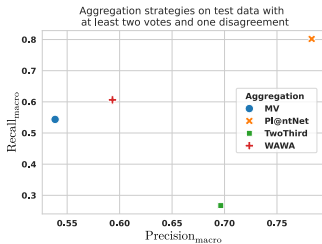


In short

- ▶ PI@ntNet aggregation performs better overall
- ▶ iNaturalist is highly impacted by their reject threshold
- ▶ In ambiguous settings (right), strategies weighting users are better

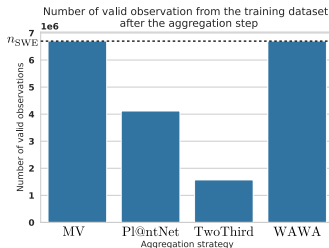
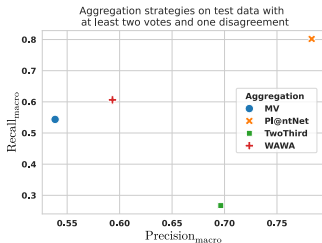
PERFORMANCE

PRECISION, RECALL AND VALIDITY



PERFORMANCE

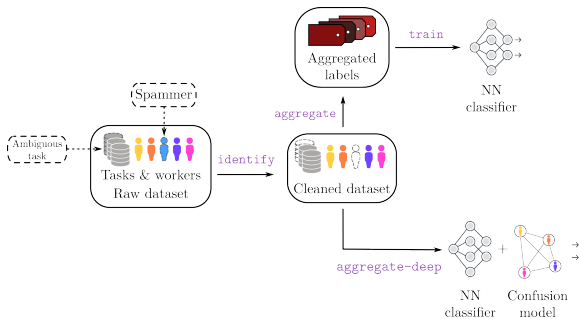
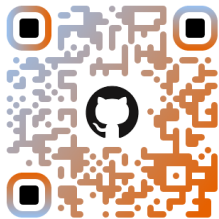
PRECISION, RECALL AND VALIDITY



In short

- ▶ PI@ntNet aggregation performs better overall
- ▶ TwoThird has good precision but bad recall
- ▶ We indeed remove some data but less than TwoThird

Peerannot: Python library to handle crowdsourced data





Take home message(s)

- Citizen science challenges: many and varied (need more attention)



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- ▶ Pl@ntNet-300K: <https://zenodo.org/record/5645731>
- ▶ Pl@ntNet SWE flora: <https://zenodo.org/records/10782465>

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- ▶ Toolbox: <https://peerannot.github.io/>
- ▶ Some benchmarks: <https://benchopt.github.io/>



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Future work

- ▶ Uncertainty quantification
- ▶ Improve robustness to adversarial users
- ▶ Leverage gamification for more quality labels **thepLantgame.com**

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Mastodon: @josephsalmon@sigmoid.social



-  Garcin, C., A. Joly, et al. (2021). “Pl@ntNet-300K: a plant image dataset with high label ambiguity and a long-tailed distribution”. *Proceedings of the Neural Information Processing Systems Track on Datasets and Benchmarks*.
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