GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION FACILITY

free and open access to biodiversity data

GBits no. 37 Nov 2013

New GBIF portal attracts over 150k visitors

Nearly 157,000 users visited the new global GBIF portal in the two months following its launch in October.

The largest number of visitors came from the United States, followed by the United Kingdom, Spain, Mexico and Germany (see table).

	Country / Territory	Visits	% Visits
1.	United States	41,885	20.16%
2.	United Kingdom	10,997	5.29%
3.	Spain	9,166	4.41%
4.	Mexico	8,655	4.16%
5.	Germany	8,510	4.10%
6.	Canada	7,626	3.67%
7.	India	7,313	3.52%
8.	France	6,811	3.28%
9.	Brazil	6,685	3.22%
10.	Italy	5,101	2.45%

The portal combines access to all the data shared through the GBIF network, with news and information about the GBIF community and uses of the data in research. It uses a new system of real-time indexing that enables new datasets to appear on the portal within hours or minutes of being published by data holders.

Since the launch at the 20th meeting of the GBIF Governing Board in Berlin, Germany on 9 October, users requested 9,659 data downloads, involving a total of 52.8 billion records.

A video showing the launch of the new portal is available at http://vimeo.com/77782067.

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20TH GBIF GOVERNING BOARD MEETING, BERLIN

GBIF to target data quality and fitness for use in 2014

GBIF will directly address long-standing concerns about the quality of biodiversity data published through the network, in its new work programme agreed at the 20th meeting of the Governing Board (GB20).

Data quality and persistence, as well as priorities for mobilizing new data, and improved information resources, are among the major themes of the programme now available as a public document.

The activities defined for 2014 are part of a three-year work programme following the main imperatives of the GBIF Strategic Plan 2012-16: advancing the content, informatics and engagement underpinning GBIF's services to science and society.

Read about some of the deliverables planned…

New Governing Board Chair elected

The GBIF Governing Board has elected Peter Schalk as its new Chair.

Schalk is managing director of the ICT sector at Naturalis Biodiversity Center in Leiden, Netherlands. He is one of the founders of Species 2000, a project to create a validated checklist of the world's species, the Catalogue of Life.

Following his election by Voting Participants, the member countries making a financial contribution to GBIF, Peter Schalk commented, "After more than a decade GBIF is a success. We should be aware of that, and be proud of that. Almost half a billion records are made available for all to use. To build their science on. To build environmental policies on. To build the planet's future on.

"GBIF serves millions of users and their numbers are growing fast. However this success comes with a price. More and more will come to depend on GBIF services. That is a great responsibility."

Schalk said that all those involved in GBIF must ensure the network's services were reliable and sustainable, and this required a business plan that worked.

Schalk replaces Joanne Daly, who completed her four-year term as Chair in October.

The Governing Board also elected a new Chair of the GBIF Science Committee, Roderic Page, Professor of Taxonomy at the University of Glasgow, United Kingdom. He replaces Leonard Krishtalka.

Read full story…

2013 GBIF Science Symposium held

This year's science symposium, entitled 'GBIF at work – advancing biodiversity science for a sustainable society', was held on 9 October 2013, in association with GB20.

Speakers at the event presented several uses of data made available through GBIF. The keynote speaker of the symposium, Miguel Bastos Araújo is winner of the 2013 Ebbe Nielsen Prize.

Presentations from the symposium are now available online and a video of Miguel Araújo's presentation is at http://vimeo.com/78160183.

Training and meeting aim to build stronger nodes

The GBIF Nodes Committee held its 12th global meeting and associated activities from 4 to 7 October, prior to GB20.

The events started with a two-day interactive training course, attended by 59 participants from 40 countries and organizations. The course contents were based on recommendations received from nodes in 2011 and 2012, and focussed on node management, promotion of data use and on new tools developed by GBIF.

The 12th meeting of the Nodes Committee, held on 6 and 7 October, helped in the sharing of experiences on a number of key topics for nodes: addressing data quality, nodes portal developments, development plans for nodes and a collaborative communication platform.

Feedback at the end of the events indicated that participants were highly satisfied with the content, the training methods and with interactions during the course, and with the organization and topics addressed in the nodes meeting.

A report on the training course is available at http://community.gbif.org/pg/file/read/38195/ and the evaluation from the meeting is at http://community.gbif.org/pg/file/read/39963/evaluation-report-12th-global-nodes-meeting.

Hugo von Linstow, the GBIF Secretariat's Deputy Director, retired in December after 11 years in the post. Hugo was closely involved in the setting up of GBIF in 2001 and the establishment of the Secretariat in Copenhagen in 2002. His experience will be greatly missed by the GBIF community.

INTERNATIONAL POLICY

CBD highlights GBIF role in meeting biodiversity targets

Government experts at the scientific advisory body for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) have stressed the need for more accessible data to achieve the Aichi Targets for reducing biodiversity loss.

The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), meeting in Montreal, Canada in October, identified 'more accessible, affordable, comprehensive, reliable and comparable information streams' among the key needs related to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-20.

In its meeting report, SBSTTA called on the CBD Executive Secretary Braulio Dias to work with GBIF and others to build capacity at regional and national levels for mobilization, management and analysis of biodiversity data, information and knowledge.

In his opening statement to the meeting, Dias called for 'continuous partnership' to enhance access to biodiversity data, following the framework of the Global Biodiversity Informatics Outlook, coordinated by GBIF.

Dias referred to the 'landmark' conference organized by GBIF last year in Copenhagen, leading to the GBIO document. "I would like to suggest that we transform this into a framework for a continuous partnership or initiative to help the implementation of Aichi Target 19 [on enhancing and sharing biodiversity knowledge] and benefiting implementation of all the other targets," Dias concluded.

Read full story…

IPBES agrees assessments, data task force

The new Integovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) has launched a series of thematic assessments aimed at informing decision makers on a range of pressing environmental issues, and a task force supporting the data and information needs of the platform.

The second plenary meeting of the Platform, held at Antalya, Turkey, approved the first IPBES work programme, covering the period 2014-18, with a total budget of $43.5m and a range of activities spanning the four functions of the new body: assessment, capacity building, knowledge generation and policy support tools.

Among the decisions of special relevance to the GBIF community is the setting up of an IPBES task force on knowledge and data, whose responsibilities will include:

- Developing a data and information management plan that identifies the best means of addressing the data and information needs of the Platform's work programme;
- Supporting the IPBES secretariat in overseeing the management of the data, information and knowledge used in developing IPBES products to ensure their long-term availability;
- Identifying opportunities for increasing access to existing data, information and knowledge so as to ensure their availability to support the work of the Platform;
- Advising on data standards; and
- Supporting IPBES bodies in reviewing knowledge needs and gaps, and catalysing the generation of new knowledge and data.

Read full story…

DATA PUBLISHING

Collaboration aims at new journal option for biodiversity data publishers

A new collaboration aims to increase the options for researchers to gain visibility and recognition for biodiversity datasets published through the GBIF network.

GBIF is collaborating with the editors of Scientific Data, the new open access, online journal from Nature Publishing Group due to launch in May 2014.

The journal introduces a new type of content called the 'data descriptor', aimed at making scientifically valuable datasets more discoverable, interpretable and reusable.

Data descriptors closely resemble the data paper concept promoted by GBIF and Pensoft Publishers, and the collaboration will develop similar methods for authoring submissions to the new journal using the standard formats for metadata recommended for sharing data through the GBIF network.

Read full story…

Report of Vocabulary Management task group now available

The outcomes of the TDWG Vocabulary Management Task Group (VoMaG), which was active during 2012-2013, are now available in a report.

GBIF played a lead role in convening and coordinating the group and drew on work funded through the ViBRANT, funded by the European Union. It provides recommendations to Biodiversity Information Standards (TDWG) on a number of topics relating to the management of vocabularies/ontologies.

The outcomes were also presented in a dedicated symposium at the annual TDWG conference held in Florence, Italy, in October.

NEW DATA

Antarctic

The Antarctic Biodiversity Information Facility (ANTABIF) has published mollusc records gathered in the Ross Sea off the coast of Antarctica in 2004. Specimens were collected with a Rauschert dredge, a type of sampling gear comprising a metal frame and two nets. The published records relate to families of sea slugs, clams, mussels and snails including Barrel bubble snails (Acteonidae), nutmeg snails (Cancellaridae), cap snails (Capulidae), moon snails (Naticidae), pyramid shells (Pyramidellidae) and murex snails (Muricidae).

France

The citizen science platform Diveboard has published over 15,000 records from the 'electronic log books' submitted by its community of nearly 100,000 registered divers. The dataset includes records of species occurrences from dives in all the world's oceans, as well as many inland water bodies.

The data will be updated as divers contribute more species observations, using GBIF's new real-time indexing system in which new or modified data can be seen on the portal within minutes or hours of being entered by the data publisher. Diveboard is the first new dataset to be indexed using this system.

Read more about Diveboard…

Spain

The Sierra Nevada Global Change Observatory has published nearly 8,000 records of plant life in the forests of the Sierra Nevada mountains near Granada in southern Spain. The data are from an inventory in 2004 that forms part of a long-term research project that aims to identify the impacts of global change on the ecology of the area. The mountains are considered to be among the richest in plant biodiversity in the western Mediterranean region.

The Department of Microbiology and Ecology at the University of Valencia has published 3,500 georeferenced records of the Ostracod class of crustaceans, commonly known as seed shrimps.

The Oceanographic Centre of Gijón, a part of the Spanish Institute of Oceanography, has published over 700 records of sponges gathered during several Spanish expeditions to the Antarctic. Samples were collected using a variety of tools including dredges, trawls and fish traps.

Norway

The University Museum of Bergen has published 72,000 records of insect and spider specimens from its entomological collections. The published records are all georeferenced, and relate to specimens collected in Norway from 1987 until 2012.

Colombia

Colombia's national network of bird observers (La Red Nacional de Observadores de Aves de Colombia – RNOA) has published over 400,000 bird observation records dating from 1948 to 2011. Data were collected during various monitoring initiatives around the country, and include sightings of endemic species such as the endangered Cauca Guan (*Penelope*

perspicax), and the critically endangered Blue-billed Curassow (*Crax alberti*) and Indigo-winged Parrot (*Hapalopsittaca fuertesi*). The data are now available both through the GBIF global portal and through Colombia's national data portal.

The Universidad del Valle published 2,300 records of birds observed in a human-disturbed environment in the National Natural Park of Farallones de Cali, in the western Andes. The observations were recorded in two localities – El Topacio and El Pato – between August 2008 and July 2009. A total of 157 species of birds were observed, of which 12 were new species for the area. Nine species recorded in El Topacio in 1978 were not spotted, and therefore considered vulnerable or locally extinct, illustrating the negative impact of habitat fragmentation on bird communities.

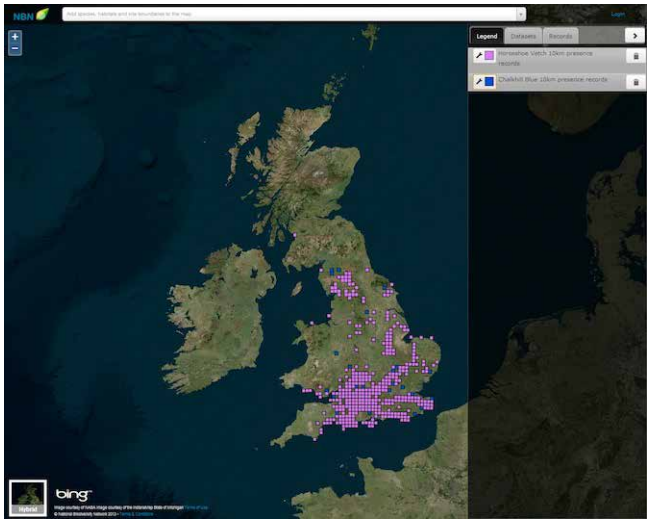
The university also published over 3,000 records of ants associated with orange crops on the Caribbean coast of Colombia. Data come from a sampling study of 38 orchards in four departments – administrative units – in the region, and provide a glimpse into the diversity of ant species in fruit farms.

AROUND THE NETWORK

UK wildlife mapping system gets an upgrade

The portal of the United Kingdom's National Biodiversity Network – the NBN Gateway – has been upgraded for better performance and stability.

The portal provides access to almost 100 million records, of which over 42 million are available through GBIF.



Among the enhancements are filtered data search, an interactive map which allows users to query multiple records and create maps of two or more species, improved data security, and detailed information for providers on data usage. New servers enable the Gateway to cope with the growing volume of data and usage.

Use of the data is governed by the NBN Gateway Terms and Conditions, to ensure that data providers and recorders are credited for the data they share.

The NBN Gateway delivers data compliant with the European Union's Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe (INSPIRE). The INSPIRE Directive aims to make it easier to access and combine environmental spatial datasets held by public authorities, to support environmental policy and practice at a national and international level.

NBN, which acts as the GBIF node in the UK, is a collaboration of government agencies, research organizations, local record centres, conservation charities and recording groups in the country.

For more information, please contact Mandy Henshell, NBN, support@nbn.org.uk.

Ireland's GBIF node launches 5-year strategic plan

The Irish Minister for Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht, Jimmy Deenihan, has officially launched the Strategic Plan 2013-2017 of the GBIF node in Ireland, the National Biodiversity Data Centre. The plan sets out the strategic objectives of the organization and presents a detailed work programme for the next five years.

The seven strategic objectives for the organization overlap closely with those of GBIF – mobilizing data, tracking change, informing decision-making, developing strategic partnerships, international collaboration, communicating and strengthening the recording base.

The NBDC has also published a guide on producing red lists of threatened species: Ireland's Red Lists – a national standard.

The document is the first in a series of reports planned by the centre on 'Developing national biodiversity data standards and guidelines'.

The NBDC has presented its 2013 Distinguished Recorder Award to Angus Tyner, for his outstanding contribution to moth recording in Ireland.
Read more...

Presentations from Taipei open data conference available

Slides from the 2013 International Conference on Open Data in Biodiversity and Ecological Research can now be accessed via the website of Taibif, GBIF's node in Chinese Taipei.

The conference, held from 20-22 November, attracted over a hundred Taiwanese scientists, researchers and students and international experts. The event was accompanied by a training workshop on publishing checklist and species occurrence data using the GBIF Integrated Publishing Toolkit (IPT).

Georeferencing learning content now online

Presentations, videos and practical exercises on georeferencing, grouped into a downloadable package, are now available via GBIF Spain's virtual classroom.

The material was put together for an online workshop, organized by GBIF Spain in October 2013, on using the software application GEOLocate for georeferencing natural history collection data.

Videos and presentations from previous workshops held in 2009 and 2010 and recent screencasts were compiled to develop the full training package.

OPPORTUNITIES

GBIF Secretariat seeks a Science Writer

The GBIF Secretariat is seeking a dynamic Science Writer, to help communicate the value of GBIF's work to key audiences.

The successful candidate must be an excellent writer and communicator in English (the primary language used in GBIF), with at least five years' experience in journalism and/or public relations. Experience in science communication will be an advantage. The post is based in Copenhagen, Denmark, and a relocation package is available.

More information…

UPCOMING EVENTS

10th plenary session of GEO and Ministerial Summit
15-17 January 2014, Geneva, Switzerland
More information…

pro-iBiosphere workshops
10-13 February 2014, Berlin, Germany
More information…
Report of the October workshop…

EMODnet Biology Species Traits Vocabulary Workshop
12-13 February 2014, Paris, France
More information…

VISION OF GBIF: A world in which biodiversity information is freely and universally available for science, society, and a sustainable future.

MISSION OF GBIF: To be the foremost global resource for biodiversity information, and engender smart solutions for environmental and human well-being.

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