



CASE STUDIES - ESPC Target 3

Development of models with protocols for conservation and sustainable use, based on research and practical experience

Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF)

GSPC Target 3: (ESPC targets 1.3, 1.6, 2.7-8, 5.3)

ESPC target 1.3: Manual of tried and tested (species and habitats) monitoring protocols for scientists and naturalists made available on the web

Relevant species or habitats

Project coordinators

Funding mechanisms



Description

The Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) is an international organisation that is working to make the world's biodiversity data accessible anywhere in the world.

GBIF's [members](#) include countries and international organisations who have signed a Memorandum of Understanding that they will share biodiversity data and contribute to the development of increasingly effective mechanisms for making those data available via the Internet.

Why is GBIF needed? Good managers of natural resources and policy-makers know that their best decisions are based on results from the most accurate scientific analyses. Such analyses are based on solid, documentable data that have been recorded directly from the observation of nature. These records are called 'primary' data.

Biodiversity is a handy, one-word name for all the species on the Earth, the genetic variety they possess, and the ecological systems in which they participate. Another way of thinking about biodiversity is as the 'living resources' portion of 'natural resources'. A large part of the primary data on biodiversity are the 1.5 - 2.0 billion specimens held in natural history collections, as well as many geographical and ecological observations recorded by various means and stored in various media.

In making living resource policy and management choices, decision-makers are often forced to rely on analyses that are not based on primary data. This is because the world's store of primary data about biodiversity is not at present readily and easily accessible.

Future generations depend on the efforts made today to develop methods for sustainably using biodiversity. One very important part of the solution is rapidly, openly and freely delivering primary data about biodiversity to everyone in the global community, using digital technologies. Another part is ensuring that the primary data being collected today are stored in such a way that they will remain accessible to future generations.

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Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF)

Description (II)

GBIF Activities Global communication has expanded remarkably since the inception of the Internet. Technical advances have made distribution of data from major centres to remote parts of the world possible, if those data are in digital form.

Biodiversity is found around the world - there are micro-organisms between granules of rock 3 km below the Earth's surface, rootless plants in the Atacama Desert, thousands of species of beetles in a single rainforest tree. However, biodiversity is not distributed evenly across the face of the planet. An estimated 75% of all species are found in the developing world.

Information about biodiversity (natural history collections, library materials, databases) likewise is not distributed evenly around the globe. Three-quarters or more of data about biodiversity are stored in the developed world. However, most of the data that may be needed can't be transferred because either they are not digitised, or capacity to handle digital information is lacking, or both.

Facilitating digitisation and global dissemination of primary biodiversity data, so that people from all countries can benefit from the use of the information, is the mission of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF).

Future challenges GBIF, the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, was established in 2001 to take on a special set of tasks that will make it possible for policy- and decision-makers, research scientists and the general public all around the world to electronically access the world's supply of primary scientific data on biodiversity.

Balancing the needs of people with actions necessary to sustainably manage living resources is the greatest challenge of the 21st century. Children and grandchildren of people living today will suffer from the ills of environmental degradation (impure air and water, reduced food supplies, emergent diseases) if decisions made now are not much better than those made in the past.

Increasing concerns about endangerment of economically important services provided to humanity by biodiversity have led to increasingly urgent calls for good scientific data and information on which to base management decisions. A number of efforts at conservation through information are being led by governmental agencies, universities and non-governmental organisations around the world.

Facilitating the work of these organisations and agencies, GBIF provides digital access to primary scientific data on biodiversity. Its Work Programme is carried out in collaboration with entities that have complementary missions. Avoidance of both competition and unnecessary duplication of effort is a mainstay of the GBIF philosophy.

GBIF Vision: http://www2.gbif.org/visionen_online.pdf

GBIF Strategic Plan: http://www2.gbif.org/strategic_plans.pdf

GBIF Targets for 2008: http://www2.gbif.org/targeten_online.pdf

Citations and Publications

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Website

<http://www.gbif.org>

