

What is GBIF?

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Coordinated through its Secretariat in Copenhagen, the GBIF network of participating countries and organizations, working through the participant nodes, provides data-holding institutions around the world with common standards, best practices and open-source tools enabling them to share information about where and when species have been recorded. This knowledge derives from many different kinds of sources, including everything from museum specimens collected in the 18th and 19th century to DNA barcodes and smartphone photos recorded in recent days and weeks.

The network draws these diverse data sources together through the use of data standards, including Darwin Core, which forms the basis for the bulk of GBIF.org's index of hundreds of millions of species occurrence records. Publishers provide open access to their datasets using machine-

readable Creative Commons licence designations, allowing scientists, researchers and others to apply the data in nearly five peer-reviewed publications every day, along with other reports, analyses and policy documents.

Each year, the GBIF Governing Board reviews and approves an annual work programme for the Secretariat that is bounded by a five-year strategic framework.



GBIF: The library of life

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Vision

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A world in which the best possible biodiversity data underpins research, policy and decisions.

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Background and history

GBIF arose from a 1999 recommendation by the Biodiversity Informatics Subgroup of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Megascience Forum. This report concluded that "An international mechanism is needed to make biodiversity data and information accessible worldwide", arguing that this mechanism could produce many economic and social benefits and enable sustainable development by providing sound scientific evidence.

The OECD panel specifically recommended the establishment of "a Global Biodiversity Information Facility" to

"enable users to navigate and put to use vast quantities of biodiversity information, advancing scientific research ... serving the economic and quality-of-life interests of society, and providing a basis from which our knowledge of the natural world can grow rapidly and in a manner that avoids duplication of effort and expenditure."

That recommendation received the endorsement of science ministers from OECD member states, and, in 2001, GBIF was officially established through Memorandum of Understanding between participating governments.

About the secretariat

The GBIF Secretariat is currently organized into four teams:

- **Participation and Engagement** is responsible for operating the network of Participants and publishers, recruiting new members and enhancing the capacity of current ones.
- **Data Products** is responsible for the quality and scientific value of the integrated data products produced by the GBIF network.
- **Informatics** is responsible for data management, software development and the overall operation of the GBIF infrastructure.
- **Administration** is responsible for maintaining both the network and the Secretariat's underlying operations and processes.