



## PRESS RELEASE



### **Big data for biodiversity: Global Biodiversity Information Facility surpasses one billion records**

- *Global Biodiversity Information Facility provides open access to data about all life on Earth*
- *Records provide researchers and policy makers with unrivalled information resource, bringing together evidence on where and when species have been observed or collected*
- *Information result of the collective efforts of more than 1,200 institutions in 123 countries.*

**9 JULY 2018** - A global platform for sharing information about the world's biodiversity has passed a major milestone, with the publication of the one-billionth species record of where a species lives through the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF).

GBIF is an international network and research infrastructure aimed at providing anyone, anywhere, open access to data about all types of life on Earth. Records freely accessible to all through the [GBIF.org platform](http://GBIF.org) provide researchers and policy makers with an unrivalled information resource, bringing together evidence gathered over centuries and across the whole planet on where and when species have been observed or collected. The facility is funded by the world's governments.

Commenting on the one-billion record milestone, GBIF's Executive Secretary Donald Hobern said: "If we want to address the big challenges we face around the future of land use, conservation, climate change, food security and health, we need efficient ways to bring together all the data capable of helping us understand the changing state of the world and the essential role that biodiversity plays at all scales.

"This milestone shows that today's GBIF is prepared for continued growth and ready to handle the massive volume of data we expect to see from other new technologies and sources."

GBIF confirmed the one-billion record landmark as delegates from 141 countries gathered in Montreal for the second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI2) to discuss the next phase of implementing the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, in anticipation of the end of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.

Dr Cristiana Pasça Palmer, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, said: “Stepping up action to combat biodiversity loss is going to require access to the best possible data and information. GBIF has demonstrated the power of big data to be harnessed in support of our objectives.

“We have the potential to unlock vast additional information resources to inform smarter responses – if we are willing to share the information we hold and invest in the infrastructure and capacity to make it available for the public good.”

The information available about the occurrence of over one billion species through GBIF is the result of the collective efforts of more than 1,200 institutions in 123 countries that willingly share data in standard digital formats, arising from natural history collections, research projects, species monitoring programmes and citizens’ observations, among many other sources.

Data accessed through GBIF.org is cited in approximately two research publications each day, covering topics as diverse as [conservation planning](#), [invasive alien species](#), [impacts of climate change](#), [food security](#) and [human disease risk](#).

GBIF’s collaborative network of [56 participating governments and 36 international organizations](#) shares skills and experiences in the mobilization and use of biodiversity data, including through capacity programmes such as Biodiversity Information for Development, funded by the European Union, supporting over 60 projects to enhance the availability of biodiversity data for policy needs in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

**GBIF—the Global Biodiversity Information Facility** is an international network and research infrastructure funded by the world’s governments and aimed at providing anyone, anywhere, open access to data about all types of life on Earth. Coordinated through its Secretariat in Copenhagen, the GBIF network of participating countries and organizations, working through participant nodes, provides data-holding institutions around the world with common standards and open-source tools that enable them to share information about where and when species have been recorded. This knowledge derives from many sources, including everything from museum specimens collected in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century to geotagged smartphone photos shared by amateur naturalists in recent days and weeks. The GBIF network draws all these sources together through the use of the Darwin Core standard, which forms the basis 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 hundreds of peer-reviewed publications and policy papers each year. Many of these analyses—which cover topics from the impacts of climate change and the spread of invasive and alien pests to priorities for conservation and protected areas, food security and human health— would not be possible without this. For more information: contact Kyle Copas on [communication@gbif.org](mailto:communication@gbif.org), or visit [www.gbif.org/](http://www.gbif.org/)

## **The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and entering into force in December 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 196 Parties so far, the Convention has near universal participation among countries. The Convention seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth,

NGOs, women and the business community. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing are supplementary agreements to the Convention. The Cartagena Protocol, which entered into force on 11 September 2003, seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 171 Parties have ratified the Cartagena Protocol. The Nagoya Protocol aims at sharing the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources in a fair and equitable way, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies. It entered into force on 12 October 2014 and to date has been ratified by 107 Parties. For more information visit: [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int). For additional information, please contact: David Ainsworth on +1 514 287 7025 or at [david.ainsworth@cbd.int](mailto:david.ainsworth@cbd.int); or Johan Hedlund on +1 514 287 6670 or at [johan.hedlund@cbd.int](mailto:johan.hedlund@cbd.int)

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