Belgian Biodiversity Platform

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BIODIVERSITY NEWSFLASH

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► Report of the conference "Empowering Biodiversity Research" of 21th May 2015

On May 21st 2015, some 140 participants (biodiversity researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders) gathered in the Palace of the Academies, in the center of Brussels for the "Empowering Biodiversity Research" conference. This conference was organized by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform and several key institutes and universities in the field of Biodiversity Informatics, with the aim to inform on ongoing Biodiversity Informatics initiatives in Belgium and reinforce further collaboration amongst actors.

Three keynotes kicked off the meeting. First, an introduction to the Belgian Biodiversity Informatics landscape was given by Hilde Eggermont, the scientific coordinator of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform. After that, Vince Smith of the Natural History Museum in London impressed us with a talk on the Future of Biodiversity Informatics, not only illustrating the current power of Biodiversity Informatics but also its future potential. Finally, the third keynote by Pieter Colpaert on the Controversy within publishing Open Data on the web was very convincing on the benefits of Open Data.

After a small panel discussion with the keynote speakers, the audience prepared for the Biodiversity Informatics Fair, set up as some kind of a market place where several key Biodiversity Informatics initiatives were presented.

In the subsequent plenary session, there was time for a series of lightning talks during which selected biodiversity initiatives were presented in a quick, insightful, and clear manner. Last but not least, there were five Belgian Biodiversity Informatics showcases: i.e. on Bird tracking, remote sensing, the Lifewatch taxonomic backbone, Antarctic biodiversity and legacy literature which all gave very insightful views on the power of Biodiversity Informatics!

To conclude, we really enjoyed this fun-filled and informative day in the Palace of the Academies and sincerely hope that it helped to empower biodiversity research in Belgium. Clearly, this is just the start! We would also like to thank our partners for co-organizing this conference.

Registration for the post conference workshops and all the presentations are available on the conference website.

➡ **Contact**: Dimitri Brosens

► "Empowering Biodiversity Research" post-conference workshops

In the aftermath of the conference, a series of workshops will be organized. Please sign up quickly as places are limited. All info here.

Data Cleaning and Data Publication workshop

During this hands-on workshop we will dig into the process of data cleaning by using OpenRefine and the publication of biodiversity data on the GBIF network. Some of the skills that will be taught :

- How to use the Integrated Publishing Toolkit
- Basic OpenRefine skills
- Standardizing your data to the Darwin Core standard
- Work with Darwin Core -Archives
- How to use the GBIF portal

➡ *Organizer*: Belgian Biodiversity Platform, INBO, RBINS & RMCA **Duration**: One day **Participants**: max 15 **Venue**: INBO Brussels **Date**: November 09 (2015) **Price**: 10€ *Use this form to register;* **Contact**: Dimitri Brosens

Data Paper workshop

A data paper is a searchable metadata document, describing a particular dataset or a group of datasets, published in the form of a peer-reviewed article in a scholarly journal. Some of the skills that will be taught :

- Writing a data paper
- Use of the Pensoft writing tool
- The use of Github, google.doc for datapapers

➡ *Organizer*: *Belgian Biodiversity Platform & INBO* **Duration**: *One day* **Participants**: *max 15* **Venue**: *INBO Brussels* **Date**: *November 10 (2015)* **Price**: *10€*Use this *form to register;* **Contact**: Dimitri Brosens

Data analysis workshop

Biodiversity data preparation and analysis using LifeWatch virtual labs and web services. Some of the skills that will be taught :

- Retrieving and working with web services
- Biodiversity data standardization and quality control
- Building analysis workflows in R, Taverna, LifeWatch e-lab, etc.

➡ *Organizers:* *VLIZ-Flanders Marine Institute* **Duration**: *two days* **Venue**: *Oostende* **Date**: *November 26-27 (2015)* **Price**: *free. Use this form to register;* **Contact**: Klaas Deneudt

Species Distribution modelling workshop

In this workshop, the whole process of species distribution modelling will be reviewed, from data preparation to model evaluation. Several modelling algorithms will be tested and compared, using the BIOMOD package implemented in R. Some of the skills that will be taught :

- Species distribution modelling
- R
- The use of the BIOMOD package in R

➡ *Organisers:* *Dirk Maes (INBO), Jessica Delangre (Ulg), Julien Radoux (UcL), Marc Dufrêne(Ulg)* **Duration**: *3 days* **Venue**: *Louvain-la-Neuve* **Date**: *September 21- 23 (2015)* **Price**: *free Use this form to register;* **Contact**: Jessica Delangre

GIS and WebGIS Workshop

Lifewatch is the European Infrastructure for biodiversity research. The goal of this course is to learn how to manipulate the Lifewatch geographic datasets with open source GIS and WebGIS software. Some of the skills that will be taught :

- Introduction to QGIS
- Extract information from vector and raster datasets
- Building a suitability map based on Lifewatch dataset
- Using spatial queries to identify observation outliers
- Displaying data on the Web with CartoDB

➡ *Organizers:* *UcL & INBO* **Duration**: *Three days* **Participants**: *max 25* **Venue**: *Louvain-la-Neuve* **Date**: *September 14-15-16 (2015)* **Price**: *to be determined; Use this form to pre-register;* **Contact**: Julien Radoux

Data Carpentry Workshop

Data Carpentry is a is a non-profit organization whose members teach researchers basic software skills. Some of the skills that will be taught :

- How to use spreadsheet programs
- Getting data into more powerful tools
- Using databases, including managing and querying data in SQL.

➡ *Organizer*: *Botanic Garden Meise* **Duration**: *Two days* **Participants**: *max 30* **Venue**: *Botanic Garden or Belspo* **Date**: *late 2015 or early 2016* **Price**: *to be determined.* **Contact**: Quentin Groom

EMPOWERING
BIODIVERSITY RESEARCH

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► BiodivERsA 2015 Joint Call : submission of pre-proposals by 20th July 2015

The BiodivERsA ERA-Net has launched its next call in May 2015, cofunded by the European Commission, with a closing date in November 2015 and tentative budget of ca. 30M €.

In this co-funded Joint Call, BiodivERsA has chosen to support research for understanding and managing biodiversity dynamics to improve ecosystem functioning and delivery of ecosystem services in a global change context. The call covers the two following independent themes:

- Theme #1: Understanding and managing the biodiversity dynamics of soils and sediments to improve ecosystem functioning and delivery of ecosystem services
- Theme #2: Understanding and managing biodiversity dynamics in land-, river- and sea-scapes (habitat connectivity, green and blue infrastructures, and naturing cities) to improve ecosystem functioning and delivery of ecosystem services

We invite you to regularly consult the webpage dedicated to the 2015 call, on which information on the call will be updated.

A two-step process will apply, with a mandatory submission of pre-proposals as a first step (**deadline: 20 July 2015, at 17:00**, local time in Brussels). Pre-proposals and proposals (in English) must be submitted electronically on the submission website.

Scientific teams are invited to form transnational research consortia with teams from minimum 3 countries participating in the call, except for proposals including research groups from outermost regions and overseas countries and territories for which it suffices if the research groups come from two different countries and the proposal concerns three different funding organisations.

The research proposals will be evaluated across criteria of scientific excellence and policy relevance/ stakeholder engagement (for more information on stakeholder engagement in BiodivERsA projects, check here). It is also expected that the European added value of the projects, which can include European OCTs (Overseas Countries & Territories) and ORs (Overseas Regions), are clearly demonstrated.

24 national/regional funding organisations from 15 countries are joining this call: Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey.

➡ *For questions related to national/regional eligibility rules and national/regional administrative requirements, please contact*

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► Biodiversity & Health, A State of Knowledge Review now available

Healthy communities rely on well-functioning ecosystems. They provide clean air, fresh water, medicines and food security. They also limit disease and stabilize the climate. But biodiversity loss is happening at unprecedented rates, impacting human health worldwide, according to a new state of knowledge review of the Convention on Biological Diversity and World Health Organization.

The report, *Connecting Global Priorities: Biodiversity and Human Health*, was launched in Brussels at the Green Week 2015, Europe's biggest annual conference on environmental policy, and focuses on the complex and multi-faceted connections between biodiversity and human health, and how the loss of biodiversity and corresponding ecosystem services may negatively influence health.

"This state of knowledge review is a significant contribution to our understanding of the complex relationships between biodiversity and health," said Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. "Increasing our knowledge enables us to develop effective solutions capable of strengthening ecosystem resilience and mitigating the forces that impede their ability to deliver life-supporting services."

Access to sufficient quantity, quality and diversity of foods, clean air, freshwater, medicines and healthcare are not only central to maintaining healthy populations, they are foundational pillars of sustainable development. Meeting these needs while facing the persistent challenges of biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, emerging disease pandemics and shifting disease burdens is not an insurmountable feat, but it does require concerted action, based on robust evidence and coordinated cross-sector solutions. This comprehensive report brings this knowledge to the forefront, demonstrating that biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation and ill health often share common threats and pointing toward innovative, mutually-supportive and cross-sectoral solutions.

This contribution is especially timely as governments finalize agreement on the post-2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals and prepare to reach new global commitments to tackle climate change by the end of 2015.

The full report is now freely available online.

► Belgian Biodiversity Platform mailinglist subscriptions

The Biodiversity Newsflash is a communication tool used by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform to publish news that are of particular interest to the Belgian biodiversity research community.

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform also offers the possibility to register to dedicated mailing lists, providing information on :

• Communities of Practice (CoPs)

1. BEES (Belgian Ecosystem Services)

The BEES network aims to connect different societal actors involved in ecosystem services research, practice and policy-making. Ecosystem services are the direct and indirect contributions of ecosystems to human survival and quality of life (TEEB synthesis report, 2010). The BEES community is open to all potentially interested organisations (policy, business, NGO's, science, consultancy, civil society,...).

2. Biodiversity and Health

The aim here is to build a strong network and stimulate capacity building; Produce an overview of the current state of Belgian knowledge regarding Biodiversity and Health; Respond to the demands of policy makers and stakeholders regarding Biodiversity and Health expertise at the Belgian level, as well as the international level in the context of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

3. Belgian Forum on Invasive Alien Species

More and more species are introduced outside their natural geographic range due to the increasing rate of trade in the world. Some of them are able to establish in their new environment and to develop dense populations where they can outcompete native species or disrupt ecosystem functioning. They are called invasive alien species.

The Belgian Forum on Invasive Species gathers scientific information on presence, distribution, auto-ecology, adverse impacts and management of invasive alien species. It regularly updates a reference list of exotic species in Belgium and is responsible for the elaboration of a black list gathering species with a strong detrimental impact on biodiversity.

• GBIF

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform is the Belgian national node of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), an international initiative that encourages free and open access to biodiversity data.

• IPBES

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is an interface between the scientific community and policy makers that aims to build capacity for and strengthen the use of science in policy making regarding biodiversity issues. IPBES is a global mechanism recognized by both the scientific and policy communities that allows scientific information on biodiversity and ecosystem services to be synthesized and analysed for decision-making purposes. The Belgian Biodiversity Platform is the Belgian National Focal Point to IPBES.

➡ *If you would like to be e-mailed with specific news about anyone of the above, please don't hesitate to contact Pierre Huybrechts at p.huybrechts@ biodiversity.be, indicating your registration preferences*

► "Biodiversity and Development, a global heritage", on 26th of November 2015

CEBioS

Capacities for Biodiversity and Sustainable Development

What is biodiversity and why should we care? How does it contribute to sustainable development, and more specifically in developing countries? What is the role of biodiversity in the fight against poverty? Why supporting the southern countries to safeguard their biodiversity? How are Belgium and the EU managing this ?

To answer these questions, and to better understand these issues, we invite you to participate in an information day, lead by CeBioS in collaboration with other partners including the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, in the framework of the European Year of Development.

museum

Program:
- Presentations
- Poster/stand session
- Debate
- Networking Lunch
- Drink

Already block this date in your calendar and come join us on November 26 !

Registration until September 30th

More information on program and registration here.

➡ *Contact : Anne-Julie Rochette*