Manual

Version 1.0

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What is pgn2scid?

pgn2scid basically is a convenient GUI wrapper (a graphical user interface for command line tools) for *pgnscid* and *scmerge*, two programs to convert PGN files to native *Scid* database files and to merge a number of *Scid* files with an existing *Scid* database. Both tools should be part of a standard *Scid vs. PC* installation.

But there's more! In detail ***pgn2scid*** can:

- keep your database up to date automatically by downloading the PGN game collections kindly provided by www.theweekinchess.com (in short TWIC).
- keep track of your downloads so that only the latest files which haven't already been downloaded are displayed
- process PGN files from other sources, let's say from your last OTB tournament or games played on a chess server. All you have to do is to put those files in ***pgn2scid***'s working directory
- automatically uncompress zipped PGN files
- automatically merge a number of PGN files into one single file
- convert any number of PGN files to the native *Scid* database format without the hassle of using command line tools
- create a zipped backup of an existing *Scid* database before performing any database merge operations
- add any number of *Scid* files to an existing database also without to use a command line tool
- every step described above is optional
- store all settings in an initialisation file so ***pgn2scid*** is already preconfigured next time it is started

Licensing

3rd party tools

pgn2scid makes use of *pgnscid* and *scmerge*, both of which had been developed by Shane Hudson and which have been released under the terms of the GNU General Public License (GPL).

Questions, comments, bugs …

If you have any questions or comments regarding ***pgn2scid*** please don't hesitate to send an email to andreaskreisig@gmail.com. You can also use this email address to report bugs. If you have a GitHub account you can also use the GitHub issue tracker for bug reports. You can find the project website on https://github.com/CasualPyDev/pgn2scid.

Before you start

Although ***pgn2scid*** is more or less self-explanatory you should read on to understand the internal workflow of ***pgn2scid***. This manual covers short descriptions of every section of ***pgn2scid*** as well as the prerequisites to install and run this software.

To avoid naming confusions, the command line tool *pgnscid (as well as all other program names)* is printed in italic while ***pgn2scid***, the software which is the subject of this manual, is printed in italic and bold. <Buttons> you can click on are enclosed in angle brackets.

The structure of this manual follows the structure of the program. All images have been taken from the Linux version. While the visual appearance might slightly differ on other operating systems, the functionality remains the same.

1. General prerequisites for all supported platforms

First of all, the Python programming language, version 3.4 or above, must already be installed on your computer. ***pgn2scid*** is a cross platform tool, running on Unix-like operating systems as well as on MS Windows as long as Python 3.4 or newer is installed on these operating systems (with an exception for Windows users – please see section 1.1). It is recommended to download the latest stable release of Python which you can get for free on www.python.org. To take full advantage of ***pgn2scid*** you also need a proper installation of the chess database *Scid vs. PC*, for the sake of simplicity hereinafter just referred to as *Scid*. You also need some tools bundled with this database, namely *pgnscid* and *scmerge*. ***pgn2scid*** might also work with other data compatible chess database programs. Maybe you then have to install *scmerge* and *pgnscid* manually as they are not necessarily a part of those database packages.

Note

The 2.7 branch of Python, which is pre-installed on most Linux distributions, will not work. You can safely install both, the 2.7 and the 3.x version of Python on the same machine.

1.1 MS Windows only

When you use MS Windows, it's not necessary to download and install the Python programming language first as there's a pre-build executable available for this operating system. In this case you just have to download the file 'pgn2scid.zip', which contains a *pgn2scid.exe* file as well as some supporting files which are necessary to run ***pgn2scid***. If you have problems running this pre-build executable you can always use the *pgn2scid.pyw* file as a fallback solution. In this case you have to take care of the general prerequisites described above.

2. Installation instructions for all supported platforms

Just copy the file *pgn2scid.pyw* into a dedicated sub folder where you have full read / write access to. You shouldn't copy it into your hard disks root folder, though because ***pgn2scid*** itself will create some sub folders and additional files during operation which then can get a bit messy when they are mixed up with other files and folders into your computers root directory.

2.1 MS Windows only

If you want to use the pre-build executable of ***pgn2scid*** all you have to do is to unzip the file 'pgn2scid.zip'. After unzipping you will find a new subfolder called 'pgn2scid' which contains the *pgn2scid.exe* file and some additional files and folders which are necessary to run ***pgn2scid***.

2.2 Linux only

To make ***pgn2scid*** executable on a Linux system, you have to open a terminal, change the directory to the location where your copy of ***pgn2scid*** resides and run the *chmod* command. Let's assume the file *pgn2scid.pyw* is located in the directory 'pgn2scid' which, in turn, resides in your home directory.

To enter the pgn2scid directory, type:

```
cd pgn2scid
```

Now, to make the file pgn2scid.pyw executable, type

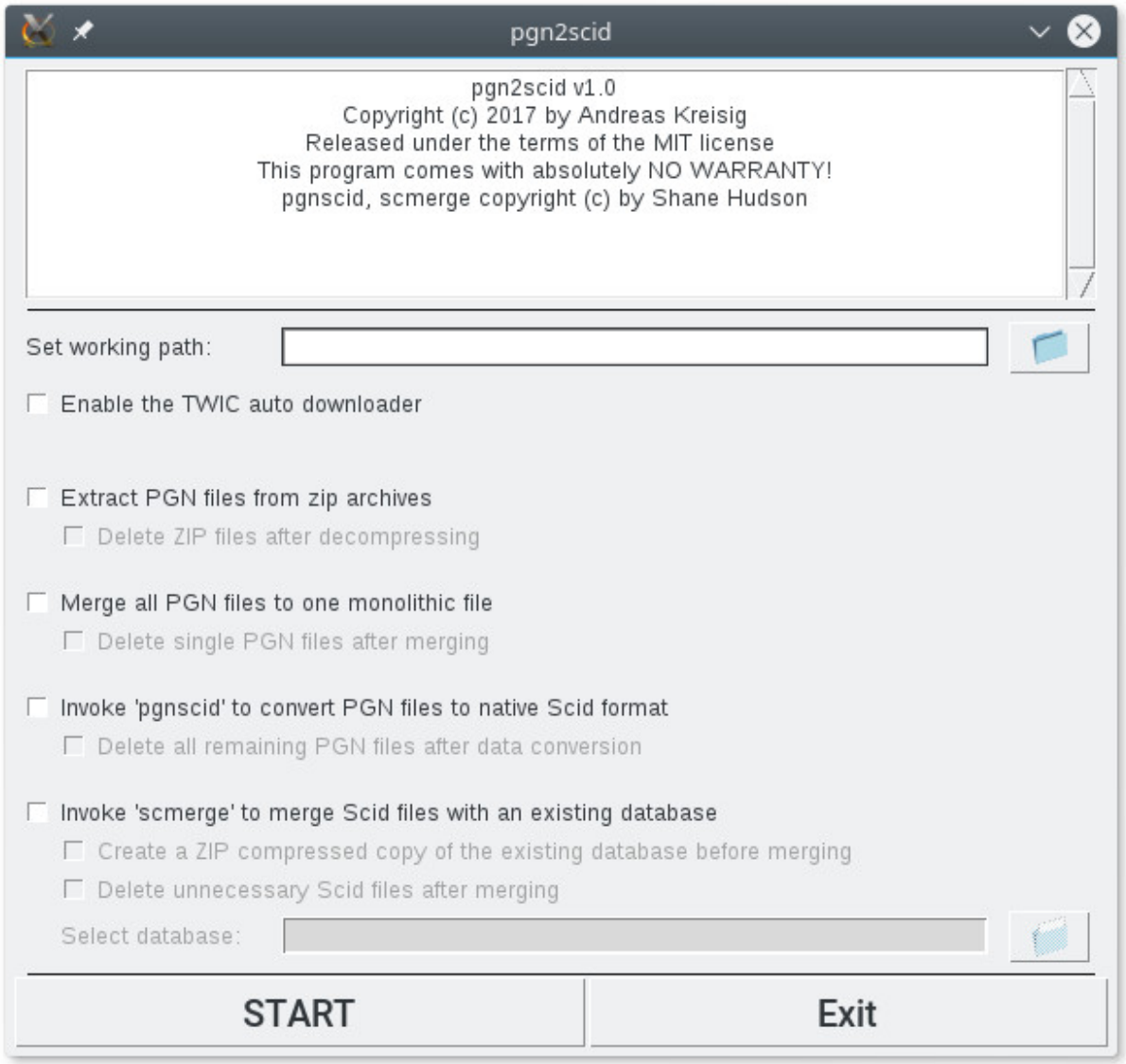
```
chmod +x pgn2scid.pyw
```

2.3 Mac OS X?

pgn2scid hasn't been tested on OS X systems yet. Generally it should work, but at the time of writing of this manual there are some well known and serious issues with the TCL/TK software package shipped with Mac OS X 10.6 and later. TCL/TK is necessary to run ***pgn2scid*** because the underlying GUI toolkit sits on top of it. If you would like to give it a try on an OS X system it's highly recommended to use a 3rd party TCL/TK 8.5 (not 8.6) like ActiveTCL 8.5 (https://www.activestate.com/activetcl/downloads). You should read the Python documentation to get more information about this topic: https://www.python.org/download/mac/tcltk/. Please keep in mind that, in opposite of a standard TCL/TK, ActiveTCL is not open source software so it's covered by a proprietary ActiveState license.

3. The main window

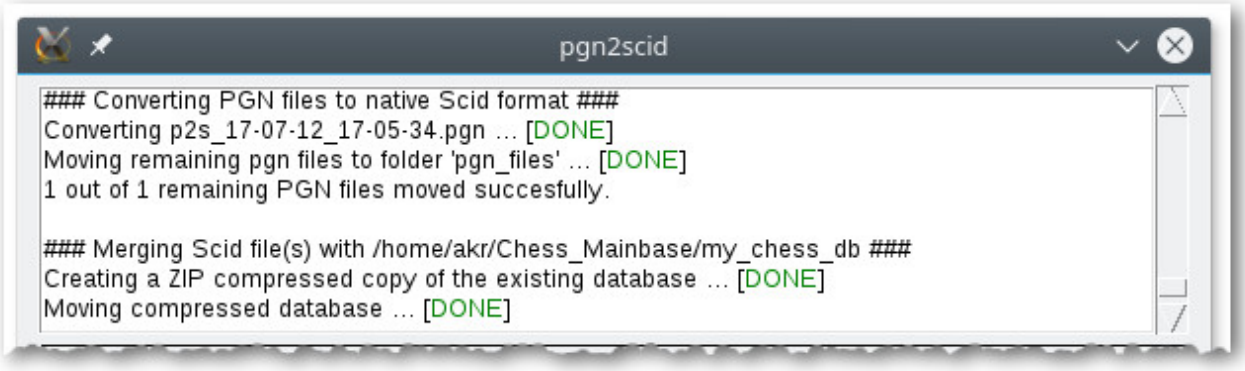
pgn2scid is a single window application, all settings are directly accessible within the main window.



4. The status window

On top of the program there is the status window. After start up it displays some information about the author of ***pgn2scid***, program version, some licensing information and some info about 3rd party tools used by ***pgn2scid***.

During data processing it shows status messages and warnings or errors. In fact, it informs you about almost every step ***pgn2scid*** is currently performing as well as about the outcome of the step in question. A successfully finished step is indicated by the word DONE, enclosed in square brackets.



Results printed in red means that something went wrong. Depending on what exactly caused a problem ***pgn2scid*** just skips the current task and goes on to the next selected option or, on more critical errors, it stops working. In the latter case an additional error message pops up displaying some information about the occurred error.

5. Set working path

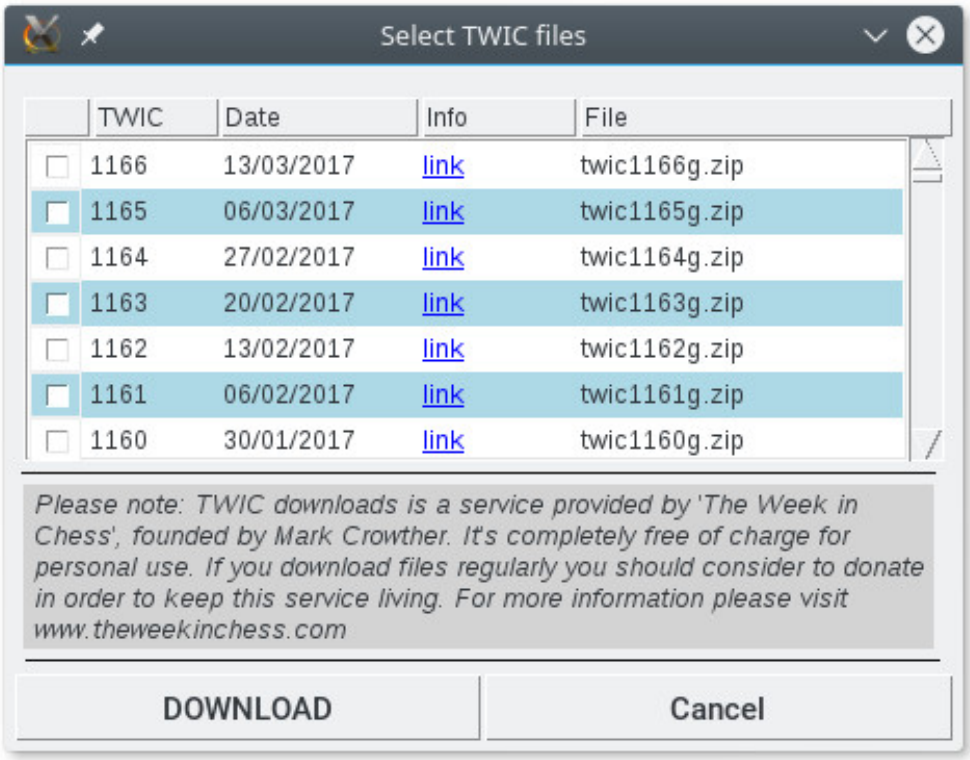
Here you have to enter or to choose a working path. You have to put all files you'd like to get processed into this folder. When you use the TWIC auto downloader (see the section below), all downloaded files are also saved into this folder. ***pgn2scid*** needs full read / write access to this folder in order to work properly. If this is not the case, the program will display an error message.

6. Enable the TWIC auto downloader

When you select this option, ***pgn2scid*** can update your *Scid* database automatically by downloading the latest tournament games found on www.theweekinchess.com (TWIC). You need a working internet connection to use this option. Proxy servers will be detected automatically. Actually this feature is more a semi-automatic downloader because ***pgn2scid*** always asks for permission before downloading any files.

6.1 The 'Select TWIC files' window

After loading and parsing the TWIC website, ***pgn2scid*** displays the 'Select TWIC files' window. All important information gathered from the TWIC website is displayed in this window, clearly arranged in a table. Just select the files you would like to download and click the <DOWNLOAD> button. Selecting <Cancel> cancels the download. If you need more information about a certain TWIC game collection before downloading it, you can click on the related 'link' entry in the 'Info' column. ***pgn2scid*** then opens your systems default web browser and loads the appropriate website.



pgn2scid keeps track of your downloads. When there are no new TWIC files available after the last download, ***pgn2scid*** doesn’t display the ‘Select TWIC files’ window. Instead the download step is skipped altogether and an appropriate message is displayed in the status window.

Note

Be careful which files you choose to download because ***pgn2scid*** remembers the highest already downloaded TWIC issue number. Every file below is not available anymore next time you use the TWIC auto downloader. For this reason it's also advisable to avoid gaps between selected TWIC files, except you are really not interested in certain issues. On the other hand you shouldn't download everything you can get to minimize server load and bandwidth and to avoid having doubled or unwanted games in your database. Please keep in mind that this service is for free for personal use so again: avoid unnecessary server load!

7. Extract PGN files from ZIP archives

When this option is selected, ***pgn2scid*** extracts ZIP compressed PGN files automatically. When there are no ZIP files in the working directory, ***pgn2scid*** skips this option, displays a message that extracting PGN files had been skipped, and goes on to the next selected option. When ***pgn2scid*** detects a filename during ZIP decompression which already exists in your working directory, a warning message pops up asking you how to proceed. You have to choose between <Skip> which skips the file in question, <Overwrite> which just overwrites the existing file or <Auto rename>. When you click on <Auto rename>, ***pgn2scid*** appends an ascending number in brackets to the filename, e.g. 'my_game.pgn' becomes 'my_game(1).pgn' and so on. When you set a check mark on 'Don't ask me again', ***pgn2scid*** performs your last selected option automatically as soon as it detects an already existent file name again, without displaying a warning message.

Note

pgn2scid only extracts files with the suffix *.pgn. When there are other type of files within a ZIP compressed file ***pgn2scid*** skips these files and displays an appropriate message in the status window.

7.1. Delete ZIP files after decompressing

Only available when 'Extract PGN files ...' is selected. Use this option to delete unnecessary ZIP files after decompressing. When you don't select this option because you want to keep these ZIP files, ***pgn2scid*** creates a new directory called 'zip_files' beneath the applications root directory. It then moves all ZIP files to this folder to keep the working directory clean. This is important to avoid processing ZIP files twice or even more often.

8. Merge all PGN files to one monolithic file

pgn2scid can merge almost any number of PGN files to one, single file. The filename is given automatically and consists of the prefix p2s, followed be a timestamp and the suffix pgn, e.g. p2s_17-06-04_19-10-48.pgn, generally: p2s_YY-MM-DD_HH-MM-SS.pgn. The timestamp format is used to make any merged PGN file unique. Whenever you want to process more than just a few number of PGN files and you'd like to convert those files to native *Scid* format it's recommended to select this option. The reason is that the conversion to the *Scid* format creates three files for every single PGN file (for details see section 6). It's even more important when you also want to integrate your converted files into an existing *Scid* database (see section 7 for more information). Merging is quite fast. On an Intel Core i5 with 2.5 GHz and a Samsung 850 EVO SSD merging more than 315.500 lines, distributed over 5 PGN files, only took about 2-3 seconds. With a standard HDD it takes a bit longer, of course.

pgn2scid is able to recognise older merged PGN files kept in the working directory. In this case a message box pops up asking whether or not to move this file. If in doubt select <Yes> here to avoid having unwanted games in your database. For the destination of this move operation see section 5.1. Selecting <No> means that this file is going to be processed according to the subsequently set options.

Note

When there is only one PGN file inside your working directory so that there is actually nothing to merge with you don't have to unselect this option. The merge process will then act just like a file rename function using the timestamp format described above.

8.1 Delete single PGN files after merging

Only available when 'Merge all PGN files ...' is selected. After PGN file merging, ***pgn2scid*** can delete all single PGN files as they are no longer needed. When you don't select this option, ***pgn2scid*** creates a folder called 'pgn_files' in your applications root directory and moves all PGN files to this location. As mentioned earlier this is to keep the working directory clean.

9. Invoke 'pgnscid' to convert PGN files to native Scid format

By selecting this option ***pgn2scid*** converts all PGN files in the given working directory to the native *Scid* database format. This is achieved by invoking the 3rd party command line tool *pgnscid*, which is executed in the background so you won't even notice it. During the conversion process *pgnscid* creates three database files per PGN file: the index file (.si4), the name file (.sn4) and the game file (.sg4). This is the reason why it is recommended to merge a larger number of PGN files before converting them. Otherwise, for example twenty single PGN files would end up in sixty(!) *Scid* database files.

9.1 Delete remaining PGN files after data conversion

When this option is selected, ***pgn2scid*** deletes all PGN files left in the working directory, including the optionally merged PGN file created before. These files are no longer needed for further processing so you can safely delete them.

When you don't select this option, ***pgn2scid*** moves these PGN files to the folder 'pgn_files', located in the applications root directory. If this folder doesn't exist, ***pgn2scid*** creates it.

9.2 The ‘pgnscid error log’ window

When *pgnscid* runs into errors during data conversion caused by a faulty PGN file, it writes an error log file into the working directory. When ***pgn2scid*** detects this error log file, it adds a timestamp to the log files content and displays the ‘*pgnscid* error log’ window. Please read these error messages carefully because you have to choose whether you’d like to ignore these errors or you’d like to suspend the faulty PGN file.

Note

Depending on the kind and number of errors displayed in the error log window, choosing <Ignore errors> might end up in a corrupt database when you merge the resulting Scid file based on a faulty PGN file with an existing Scid database.

Ignore errors: ***pgn2scid*** ignores all errors displayed in the ‘*pgnscid* error log’ window and appends the log files content to a master log file called ‘pgn2scid_error.log’. This master log file, which collects all cumulated data conversion errors across all sessions so far, resides in the applications root directory. If there’s no such file, ***pgn2scid*** will create it. The initial error log file (NOT the master log file) will be deleted. Finally ***pgn2scid*** goes on to the next PGN file or to the next selected option.

Suspend file: ***pgn2scid*** deletes all formerly created *Scid* files based on the faulty PGN file. It then moves the faulty PGN file to the folder ‘suspended_pgn_files’, located in the applications root folder. If this folder doesn’t exist, ***pgn2scid*** creates it. It then adds the log files content to the master log file. The initial log file will be deleted. Afterwards ***pgn2scid*** goes on to the next PGN file or to the next selected option.

When you have suspended a faulty PGN file, you can always read the master log file which gives you hints about where in this PGN file you have to look for the mentioned errors. You can then open the PGN file with a text editor (it’s just an ASCII file), correct any errors and move the file back to the applications working directory to see if it now passes the conversion process without errors.

Note

To correct errors in a PGN file you need to have a good understanding of the PGN file format and the algebraic chess notation, otherwise you could make things even worse!

10. Invoke ‘scmerge’ to merge Scid files with an existing database

You have to select this option when you want to merge two or more *Scid* databases, either created by ***pgn2scid*** (please refer to section 6 for more details) or from any other source. In most cases, the other database to merge, specified in ‘Select database’ (see section 7.3) is your ‘main database’, containing all the games you have collected so far. ***pgn2scid*** uses the external command line tool *scmerge* to perform this operation. As with *pgnscid*, *scmerge* is executed in the background, so you don’t have to deal with a command line interface. Actually, due to its internal function, *scmerge* can’t merge *Scid* databases directly. Instead it always creates a third database, consisting of the two databases you want to merge. You don’t have to worry about this because ***pgn2scid*** has a build in ‘workaround’ addressing this issue so at the end of the merge operation you will always and only have your existing database, containing your already collected games plus all the new games. There are some file operations involved here hence it’s important to BACKUP your database regularly.

Note

It’s advisable to merge a larger number of PGN files (described in section 5 of this manual) before converting them to the native *Scid* format, particularly if you finally want to merge them with an existing Scid database because it minimises file operations and therefore hard disk activity.

10.1 Create a ZIP compressed copy of the existing database before merging

Before starting database merging ***pgn2scid*** can create a zipped copy of your selected database. This is NO REPLACEMENT of a real backup, of course, but it can help to recover your database quickly if something goes wrong during the merging process. When you select this option, ***pgn2scid*** ZIP compresses all database files, namely the .si4, the .sg4 and the .sn4 file into one ZIP file and writes it into the ‘scid_db_copy’ folder, located in the applications root directory. If this directory doesn’t exist, ***pgn2scid*** creates it first.

Similar to the PGN merge operation described in section 5 a timestamp format is used to safe the zipped *Scid* database copy. Let’s assume your existing *Scid* database is named ‘my_chessgames.si4’, the ZIP file will be named as ‘my_chessgames_YY-MM-DD_HH-MM-SS.zip’.

10.2 Delete remaining Scid files after merging

After merging database files successfully ***pgn2scid*** can safely delete the remaining *Scid* files because they are not necessary anymore. Don’t select this option when you want to keep those files. In this case, ***pgn2scid*** creates the folder ‘scid_files’ in your applications root folder and copies all *Scid* database files into this folder to keep the working directory clean.

10.3 Select database

Here you have to select an already existing database to which you want to add other *Scid* files to, either created by ***pgn2scid*** or from other sources. If ‘Invoke *scmerge* to merge Scid files ...’ is selected and there’s no database given here, a warning message pops up informing you that you have to select a *Scid* database first.

11. START

When you have configured ***pgn2scid*** as desired (or the last successful configuration have been read out of the ‘pgn2scid.ini’ file) you can press the <START> button. ***pgn2scid*** then processes all selected options from top to bottom if possible. Within the status window (see section 1 for more information) you can follow the steps currently performed by ***pgn2scid***.

If ***pgn2scid*** can’t perform a selected task, e.g. due to missing files, the selected step will be skipped and an appropriate message is displayed.

{Insert picture}

This is not necessarily an error. In most cases ***pgn2scid*** continues normally and it tries to process the next file or it goes to the next selected option.

After completing all tasks successfully ***pgn2scid*** writes the current set of options as well as the selected path and database file to a configuration file called ‘pgn2scid.ini’. This file is located in the applications root directory.

Note

When you start ***pgn2scid*** it reads the configuration file ‘pgn2scid.ini’. If this file is missed or corrupt, ***pgn2scid*** displays an appropriate warning message. Just click on <OK> then. There’s no further action required on your part, because ***pgn2scid*** always creates a new and valid configuration file based on your last settings as soon as ***pgn2scid*** passes all selected options without errors. The only consequence is that your last settings might be lost and you might have to reconfigure the program.

12. Exit

Exits ***pgn2scid***.