Biodiversity Information Standards (TDWG)
http://www.tdwg.org

Socio-Biodiversity Task Group

This Task Group is not sponsored by any Interest Group.

1. Convenor

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3. Motivation

There is an increasing need to aggregate data from community-based monitoring initiatives, which often involve traditional knowledge held by local, peasant, Afro-descendant, Indigenous, and other communities. This data is frequently connected to the ways in which these communities relate to biodiversity. Currently, this information is often used without proper acknowledgment or linking of its original sources, even when publicly available. Integrating these datasets into national information systems is important to ensure appropriate attribution, traceability and to document related biodiversity use practices and benefits in line with the Darwin Core standard. While progress has been made in developing local context labels, this extension will focus on how to document such data within the Darwin Core schema, complementing ongoing labeling initiatives.

4. Goals, Outputs and Outcomes

The Socio-Biodiversity Task Group aims to develop an extension for the Darwin Core standard to represent socio-biodiversity data—especially species information linked to traditional knowledge regarding biodiversity use practices and benefits—in ways that ensure ethical handling, legal compliance, traceability, interoperability, and knowledge preservation. The group seeks to support accurate documentation, recognition, and attribution of traditional knowledge and its origins, promoting benefit-sharing and preventing misuse.

Key Objectives and Outputs:

- Provide a community-driven framework to ensure that biodiversity use and benefits information derived from traditional knowledge is properly documented, recognized, attributed, and preserved for future generations.
- Develop a standardized Darwin Core extension for documenting biodiversity uses, benefits, and associated traditional knowledge, including community-sourced data.
- Define appropriate classes, terms, definitions, and vocabularies to ensure consistent, ethical, interoperable, and preservable representation of data.

- Support accurate attribution of traditional knowledge holders and promote data practices aligned with ethical and legal standards, enhancing recognition and long-term preservation of this knowledge.
- Validate the extension using multiple datasets and diverse data sources to ensure its robustness, applicability, and interoperability across different socio-biodiversity contexts.

Out of scope:

- *The Task Group will not describe specific products or transformation processes involving biodiversity resources. Still, we are aware of their importance, and this could be revisited later as part of a broader discussion, either by extending the current approach or exploring other strategies.*
- It will not address license types, authorizations, or governance-related metadata, though some suggestions have arisen during the process.

Expected Deliverables:

- A Darwin Core extension (vocabulary) compliant with TDWG's Vocabulary Maintenance Specification;
- A Feature Report summarizing community input and use cases;
- Supporting documentation, including human-readable term lists;
- Publicly accessible meeting notes, discussions and records stored in the SiBBr GitHub repository.

5. Strategy

- Communication will occur primarily via the mailing list and GitHub Issues.
- All records—including meeting notes, drafts, and related documents—will be stored in the SiBBr public GitHub repository to ensure open and transparent collaboration.
- For each term under discussion, a dedicated GitHub issue will be created (https://github.com/sibbr/cesp-sibbr-2024/issues) to organize contributions, discussions, and decisions.
- This approach ensures that all progress is documented, searchable, and publicly accessible.

6. Becoming Involved

Individuals with relevant expertise are encouraged to join the Task Group, including:

- Data holders, such as communities, local groups, or researchers (academic or community-based) who manage socio-biodiversity information and community-sourced datasets;
- Data users and biodiversity informaticians who need standardized ways to describe socio-biodiversity;
- Experts in traditional knowledge, legal frameworks, or controlled vocabularies relevant to socio-biodiversity.

To participate, contact the convenor and join the GitHub repository and mailing list to receive updates and contribute to discussions.

7. History/Context

The Socio-Biodiversity Task Group builds on the work initiated by the GBIF/CESP 2024-015 project, *"Developing a Data Extension for Documenting Socio-Biodiversity Information."* This project brought together experts from Brazil, Colombia, and Argentina to explore how socio-biodiversity data—particularly species information linked to traditional knowledge—can be more effectively represented in biodiversity information systems.

Through CESP workshops, online meetings, community consultations, and expert discussions, participants collaboratively designed and refined a Darwin Core extension dedicated to socio-biodiversity. The project includes three case studies used for initial validation. Although these studies primarily focus on ethnobotany, the goal is to refine and improve the extension after validation, so it can be adapted for future case studies involving animals and microorganisms. These efforts emphasized the creation of clear vocabularies and consistent definitions to enhance the reliability, interoperability, and usability of the extension.

The establishment of this Task Group formalizes these ongoing efforts within TDWG, providing a structured framework for open participation, broader community input, and the eventual recognition and adoption of the extension as part of TDWG standards.

In parallel, GBIF has established a Task Group on Indigenous Data Governance, and we plan to advance discussions in coordination with this group to ensure alignment and mutual learning.

8. Summary

The Socio-Biodiversity Task Group (TDWG) develops a Darwin Core extension to document species uses, benefits, and traditional knowledge ethically, legally, and interoperably. It builds on the GBIF/CESP 2024-015 project, validated with three ethnobotany-focused case studies and adaptable to animals and microorganisms. The group includes experts from Brazil, Colombia, and Argentina, fostering community-driven collaboration. Key outputs include the extension, a Feature Report, term definitions, and public GitHub records. It ensures proper attribution, knowledge preservation, and promotes benefit-sharing while excluding governance and licensing issues. Open participation is encouraged for data holders, informaticians, and traditional knowledge experts via GitHub and mailing lists.

9. Resources

- Project in GBIF - https://www.gbif.org/project/CESP2024-015/developing-a-data-extension-for-documenting-socio-biodiversity-information
- Project in SiBBr - https://www.sibbr.gov.br/page/cesp/cesp-2024.html
- GitHub - https://github.com/sibbr/cesp-sibbr-2024/issues
- Task Group on Indigenous Data Governance https://www.gbif.org/news/1Ke3Gk2USgdIW5OgDlBIKY/open-data-for-people-and-purpose-gbif-establishes-task-group-on-indigenous-data-governance