



The Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network

Partnerships Are Key

Sharing biological knowledge across international borders

Environmental challenges can be addressed most effectively when knowledge is shared across international borders. Knowledge-sharing helps coordinate activities, informs decision-makers about the factors affecting biodiversity and the conservation measures that have worked, and multiplies the value of research.

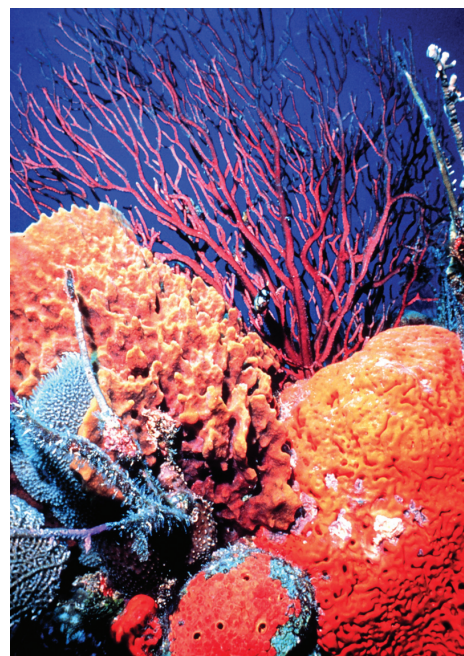
The Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN)—supported by 34 national governments, many inter- and non-governmental organizations, private sector institutions, and the Organization of American States—promotes greater coordination among Western Hemisphere countries in the collection, sharing, and use of biodiversity information relevant to decision-making and education.

IABIN links participants – from national networks to individual institutions – to others in the Western Hemisphere, and to the Clearing-House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Global Biodiversity Information Facility. Collaborations among agencies at all levels of government, nongovernmental and inter-governmental organizations, universities, and private sector enterprises ensure that efforts are complementary and build on each other. All organizations are invited to participate.

Originally mandated by the Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development in Santa Cruz, Bolivia in 1996, IABIN has since been supported in later Summits of the Americas, including those in Quebec City in 2001 and Trinidad and Tobago in 2009.

Implementation of the IABIN-GEF Project

Beginning in 2002, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded a consultative process through which IABIN participants, in collaboration with the Clearing-House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity, defined how to strengthen and develop the network. This process resulted in a \$6 million GEF project to develop an Internet-based, decentralized network to provide access to scientifically credible biodiversity information. Over 70 institutions throughout the hemisphere have committed a total of over \$30 million in cofinancing toward the project.



Sponge, coral, and searod in the Caribbean

Photo credit: Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Staff



White-nosed coatis, native to nine countries of the Western Hemisphere

Photo credit: John Mosesso, Jr.



Female Tucson Banded Gecko (Coleonyx variegatus bogerti) from the southwestern United States

information exchange, and facilitate the inclusion of biodiversity themes in national agendas.

Since initiating the project in 2004, IABIN has disbursed over 120 data content grants through these TNs to institutions in the Americas, allowing data holders to digitize and normalize their data according to internationally recognized standards. Each TN has also developed or adapted a suite of standards and tools to facilitate this process and has worked with each provider to check the quality and completeness of their data.

Contributions from the United States

Free and fast access to biodiversity information is the common goal of IABIN and the U.S. National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII). The NBII links diverse, high-quality biological databases, information products, and analytical tools maintained by NBII partners and other collaborators. The NBII also develops standards, tools, and technologies that make it easier to find, integrate, and apply biological information. Both the NBII and IABIN endorse the development of a common set of standards to ensure that retrieval and exchange of information can take place across political, linguistic, and institutional boundaries; and both emphasize that ownership of the data remains with their source.

The NBII actively supports IABIN as the U.S. Focal Point and as Chair of the IABIN Council. The NBII furthers

IABIN by establishing cooperative linkages with national, regional, and global initiatives; recommending standards; evaluating software tools; developing pilot projects; hosting key IABIN Web sites and a mirror for the IABIN gateway; and seeking support for projects that build capacity within participating countries and institutions. For example, the NBII led the development of the IABIN Invasives Information Network (I3N) and continues to manage the project, facilitate communication, and host data for institutions that cannot host the data themselves.

For More Information

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Tools for Sharing Information

IABIN benefits from NBII-developed software tools, such as a cataloguer that provides a simple way of creating metadata records and sharing these with others in the network. The NBII also continually expands access to scientifically validated content relevant to all of the Americas. For example, it created a searchable catalog of biodiversity data sources in Latin America and the Caribbean that allows users to locate data sets, publications, and museum collections. NBII's Biocomplexity Thesaurus has been utilized as the basis for IABIN's own trilingual (Spanish, English, Portuguese) thesaurus driving IABIN's search and retrieval tool, the IABIN Catalog.