**Bee Checklist Buzzes Online**

Biologists have recently completed an online effort to compile a world checklist of bees. They have identified nearly 19,500 bee species worldwide, about 2,000 more than previously estimated. There is a current crisis known as “colony collapse disorder,” an unexplained phenomenon that is wiping out colonies of honey bees throughout the United States. This crisis has highlighted the need for more information about bee species and their interactions with the plants they pollinate.

“At a time when biological diversity is suspected to be declining at an alarming rate, it is important to have a solid baseline from which to measure future trends,” said Michael Ruggiero, senior scientist for the Integrated Taxonomic Information System at the National Museum of Natural History, who led the recently completed project. “This is very exciting because bees are critical for pollinating flowering plants, including most non-cereal food crops.”

The bee checklist includes currently accepted scientific names, synonyms and common names. A current, complete and authoritative taxonomic checklist is key to linking all information about species. The scientific name acts as the common denominator to connect like information. Taxonomic information is not fixed and throughout time biologists reclassify species as a result of new discoveries or new research.

Compiling the checklist has taken more than five years and the efforts of leading bee taxonomists on six continents. The checklist, coordinated by the staff of the Integrated Taxonomic Information System, a public–private partnership hosted at the National Museum of Natural History, is available at http://www.itis.gov.

Major supporters of the project were the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, based in Copenhagen, Denmark, which is dedicated to making global biodiversity data accessible anywhere in the world, and the U.S.-based National Biological Information Infrastructure, a broad, collaborative program to provide increased access to data and information on the nation’s biological resources.

**Conferences**

National Council for Science and the Environment (NCSE) welcomes you to participate in the 9th National Conference on Science, Policy, and the Environment: **Biodiversity in a Rapidly Changing World**. This interactive conference will take place December 8-10, 2008 in Washington, DC, with goals to develop a new biodiversity strategy in a 21st century context. Plan on joining part of the discussion with government officials, scientists, businesses, and NGOs. For more information visit http://www.ncseonline.org/conference/biodiversity. Registration will open in early fall.

**Current Literature**


by bycatch along the east coast of South Africa. Conserv. Genet. 9(3):627-636.


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