

Chapter 1

Background and aim of this manual

by

Christoph L. Häuser

Museum für Naturkunde
Invalidenstr. 43, 10115 Berlin, Germany
Email: christoph.haeuser@mfn-berlin.de

Jérôme Degreef

National Botanic Garden of Belgium
Domaine de Bouchout, B-1860 Meise, Belgium
Email: jerome.degreef@br.fgov.be

Xavier Eekhout

Department of Biodiversity and Evolutionary Biology
National Museum of Natural History (CSIC)
Jose Gutierrez Abascal 2, 28006 Madrid, Spain.
Email: xeekhout@mncn.csic.es

Jutta Eymann &

Juan Carlos Monje

Staatliches Museum für Naturkunde Stuttgart
Rosenstein 1, 70191 Stuttgart, Germany
Email: jutta.eymann@gmx.de, monje.smns@naturkundemuseum-bw.de

Klaus Riede

Zoologisches Museum und Forschungsinstitut Alexander Koenig
Adenauerallee 160, 53113 Bonn, Germany
Email: k.riede.zfmk@uni-bonn.de

Didier VandenSpiegel

Royal Museum for Central Africa
Chaussée de Louvain 13, B-3080 Tervuren, Belgium
Email: dvdspiegel@africamuseum.be

Jackie Van Goethem &

Yves Samyn

Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences
Vautierstraat 29, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium
Email: jackie.vangoethem@naturalsciences.be, yves.samyn@naturalsciences.be

1. Introduction

The idea for this book originated when planning, organizing and carrying out field work for the first All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory and Monitoring (ATBI+M) pilot sites established in the National Parks Mercantour and Alpi Marittime (France/Italy) in 2007, as part of the activities of the EDIT (European Distributed Institute of Taxonomy: www.e-taxonomy.eu) network, supported for five years by the European Commission. One of the overall aims of the EDIT project is to better integrate taxonomic research with biodiversity conservation. To attain this objective, innovative and new methods and tools for inventorying and monitoring biodiversity have to be deployed (Häuser *et al.*, 2007).

Individual participants embarking on inventories as well as partners from the hosting national parks frequently asked the project coordinators which are the best-recommended or "standard" techniques and protocols for inventorying specific taxa or habitats. Formulating a response to these questions often was not straightforward as several approaches and methods are described in the, often scattered, literature. In order to provide ATBI+M participants, as well as other interested parties, with appropriate information, it was proposed that "field experiences" should be captured and made available for wider dissemination and use.

2. Background and aim

The intention to produce an explicative manual that liberates 'good practices' in ATBI+M methods was agreed on during a workshop on "ATBI+M field recording techniques and protocols" which was organized from 12-17 June 2007 at the El Ventorillo Field Station of the Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales, north of Madrid, Spain (Eekhout & Riede, 2007). This meeting brought together participants for practical demonstrations and hand on tests of various field methods, tools and equipment, ranging from light trapping over bioacoustics to tissue sampling techniques.

During a second EDIT workshop - convened from 25-27 January 2009 at the Botanic Gardens Canario 'Viera y Clavijo' at Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain - several potential authors and contributors for the ATBI+M manual were brought together (Eymann & Monje, 2009). This meeting, attended by 34 participants from 12 EDIT partner institutions in Europe and the United States (fig. 1), had as net result the outline for this book detailing individual parts and chapters, most of which now constitute the core of the present volume. It was also agreed that the manual should really focus on the practical aspects of fieldwork, particularly collecting and recording techniques, as well as on questions related to subsequent treatment of collected materials and data analysis.

From the EDIT perspective, the main target audience would include students and researchers participating at ATBI+M and other biodiversity inventory or monitoring projects, who already have a good background in biodiversity research or even specialist knowledge for a certain group, but who want to embark on surveying groups and habitats not yet familiar to them.

While EDIT's reach from its funding and network perspective being mostly European, all prospective authors agreed that the geographic focus of such a book should be global, and not restricted to (European) temperate habitats and conditions. Also all contributors agreed that this manual should not just be produced in print, but should also be freely available online, with the aim of regular updating. The latter desire originates with the realisation that the formulated recommendations on (digital) equipment will most possibly be swiftly outdated given the current rapid pace of innovation.

3. *Abc Taxa* as the artery that spreads capacity in taxonomy and collection management

To assure high quality, open access and wide dissemination, both in Europe and beyond, the journal *Abc Taxa* (www.abctaxa.be) was chosen as publication medium.

Abc Taxa is the capacity building journal of the Belgian National Focal Point to the Global Taxonomy Initiative (Samyn *et al.*, 2008). This relatively new journal started in 2006 and has in the past been entirely funded by the Belgian Development Cooperation (www.dgdc.be) who recognizes that worldwide critical taxonomic capacity is needed to underpin effective sustainable exploitation and conservation of biodiversity, in particular in developing countries where man directly relies on the goods and services that biodiversity supplies.

For the production and distribution of the present volume, an equal-cost sharing partnership between the Belgian GTI National Focal Point and EDIT was set up. The Belgian GTI office will, conform to its usual strategy, distribute the book through the GTI and CHM (Clearing-House Mechanism) network of the Convention on Biological Diversity and, on motivated demand, send it free of charge to interested parties in developing countries. EDIT WP7, on the other hand, will distribute the book to participants of ATBI+M projects and to selected parties in the EDIT network.

For the research community outside the EDIT network and the developing world copies can be purchased with *Abc Taxa* at making and distribution cost. Prices are indicated on the site of the series (www.abctaxa.be).

4. Conclusion

While hopefully offering a comprehensive and relevant source of information for conducting fieldwork, this manual is not meant to establish individual methods or specific approaches as new or universal standards. Rather, as expressed in several contributions, the exact approach or precise standard to be followed for any particular study should be determined by the specific question(s) being asked, also by taking the available budget and resources into account.

In presenting the relevant techniques, their advantageous and disadvantageous aspects and the efforts required, this book strives to be a useful basis to select the "best" method under individual circumstances. Obviously, not all major taxa, habitats or methods have been covered in this volume, but we expect that the

present volume of the series *Abc Taxa* will be welcomed as a useful and comprehensive compendium of best practises in ATBI+M and other fieldwork.



Fig. 1. Participants to the 'ATBI+M Manual' workshop in Las Palmas (Photo by A. Steiner).

5. References

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