What is SeaLifeBase? (www.sealifebase.org)

SeaLifeBase is a joint project of the Sea Around Us (University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada) and Quantitative Aquatics, Inc. (Q-antics, Los Baños, Philippines), and is endorsed and monitored by the FishBase Consortium. In response to the need to cover organisms besides fishes, SeaLifeBase was initiated in 2005 and went online in late 2008.

In 2010, SeaLifeBase started completing species assignments by ecosystem, with an obvious interest, i.e., the South China Sea, the large marine ecosystem that contains the Coral Triangle, a marine biodiversity hotspot. This was followed by a string of commissioned work that will provide information on the marine biodiversity of islands being considered as large marine protected areas, notably those by the Global Oceans Legacy (Pew Charitable Trusts).

As of January 2019, SeaLifeBase contains over 75,300 species (63,280 species with ecology information; 61,781 species recorded for 528 marine ecosystems; 66,018 species with reproduction information; 2,003 species with morphological data) described by 55,622 common names, with 19,814 food item records, 654 diet records, 9,117 abundance records, 4,785 predator records, 3,940 growth records, 1,606 introduction records and 12,911 pictures gathered from 55,677 references.

Objectives

The long-term goals of this project are:
1. To create and maintain a FishBase-like information system for all non-fish marine organisms, ca. 400,000 spp. Of these, marine organisms (about 240,000 spp) are the target of the current project phase;
2. Make available the biological and ecological information necessary to conduct biodiversity and ecosystem studies, taking advantage of lists of species already available on paper and electronically, and using the scientific names as ‘hook’ to organize biodiversity information;
3. Work on one or two island ecosystems at a time, the project gears closer toward its goal to assign species to large marine ecosystems (66 ecosystems worldwide).

Output and activities

In 2011, the SeaLifeBase team was commissioned to provide data on the marine biodiversity of Belize which was used to support advocacy movements against drilling that later successfully pushed for the protection of this marine ecosystem.

Since then, other island ecosystems have been covered, Kermadec, Pitcairn Island, French Polynesia and Easter Island, to name a few.

To date, SeaLifeBase has covered 11 island ecosystems, and 22 large marine ecosystems, and have partnered 295 collaborators coming from 64 countries (see map).

As the project continues on its goal, SeaLifeBase has increased its presence online, and gained more than 47.4 Million hits from 223 countries for the whole of 2018, demonstrating its global influence and reach.

Be a collaborator

Who:

- SeaLifeBase invites marine biologists, photographers and other enthusiasts to become a part of our growing network.
- Colleagues who supply data (in form of reprints, reports, unpublished theses, photographs, etc.)
- Colleagues who validate data (experts, researchers, etc.)

All collaborators have their own profile on the SeaLifeBase website, to give due credit to their work and contributions.

How: You may send your contributions to sealifebase@q-antics.org

Why:

- Their published work will reach more people;
- Their work will become integrated into a larger whole, and thus become easier to assimilate, while remaining theirs in terms of scientific credit;
- The integration in SeaLifeBase involves checking of at least the scientific names and generally leads to the identification of errors which, while easily corrected, may not have been noticed otherwise.

We believe through collaboration we can improve our tables and coverage, and hence SeaLifeBase.

Frequently asked questions

Where do you get your information?
- We get information from published scientific papers, catalogs, reprints, reports, unpublished theses, specimen data in museums, photographs, etc.

Do you have information on freshwater species?
- SeaLifeBase's main focus for now, is to provide data for all marine organisms

Do you have information on marine plants?
- Marine plants are included in SeaLifeBase. However we have partnered with Algaebase, which is the largest repository for data on marine algae.

How often do you update your database?
- Our data is updated every two months.

Partners

Oak Foundation
Willow Grove Educational Foundation
Canada Foundation for Innovation
Global Greengrants Fund
ASEAN Center for Biodiversity
The Pew Charitable Trusts
Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle
The Paul G. Allen Family Foundation
University of Western Australia
University of Hong Kong
Alfred-Wegener-Institut
GEOMAR

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Countries covered (35) by SeaLifeBase faunal work for 11 island ecosystems, and 22 large marine ecosystems (LMEs).