CNDDB Newsletter

Biogeographic Data Branch   **January 2010**
Department of Fish and Game

Dear Friends,

This is the eighth edition of a periodic newsletter letting you know of important updates and changes in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB).

Please feel free to share this email with your staff or with others who didn't receive it. If you have colleagues who would like to receive this, just let us know by emailing BDB@dfg.ca.gov to update our list of recipients. You may also access this newsletter, and previous CNDDB newsletters, on our website at http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/cnddb/.

January 2010 NEWS from the CNDDB

1. *New Protocols for Plant Surveys released*
   - A new set of Protocols (formerly called Guidelines) for conducting appropriate plant surveys has been published on the DFG website in a number of places including here: *Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special Status Native Plant Populations and Natural Communities* (Nov 24, 2009)
   - These Protocols are completely revised and provide greater detail, clarity and numerous helpful links for people involved in preparing or reviewing environmental documents of any kind. They replace the former *Guidelines for Assessing the Effects of Proposed Projects* you were previously using.

2. *Change in CNDDB Data Update Schedule*
   - The current update cycle is now once every two months rather than once/month. This means that your Username/Password is good for two months now to access RareFind 4, BIOS and the Data Download pages. Use the Data Download page (http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/cnddb/rf_ftpinfo.asp) to download new data for your desktop RareFind 3 and CNDDB GIS project; note that these products must be in synchrony in order to provide you with the correct answers to your queries. You do not need to update RareFind 4 nor BIOS; DFG maintains both of those Internet products for you. We hope to return to a monthly update cycle in the future.

3. ***RareFind 4 – What is it?***
   - *RareFind 4* is now officially released. You may know that *RareFind* started out as a CNDDB program in DOS, migrated to Windows, and then went through several Windows versions. *RareFind 4* is an Internet application with no requirement to install any program on individual computers or to update your text data. Instead, we will refresh the CNDDB data on our server on the first Tuesday of every other month. For GIS users: Note that you will still have to update your ArcView GIS data as you did before by downloading it from our secure website.
   - *RareFind 4* contains enhanced capabilities including some direct connectivity with BIOS (allowing the user to quickly view the GIS data for a single occurrence in BIOS by clicking on a special icon in *RareFind 4*). Other enhancements include the ability to query on date ranges, elevation ranges, last updated date, and text searches in the "comments" field for each occurrence.
   - In addition, query results are easily exported to Microsoft Excel. We have provided the usual canned reports as well.
   - All CNDDB users have access to *RareFind 4* now; just login to the DFG Data Portal (http://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/) using (for DFG staff) your Novell password or (for other clients) your bimonthly password and click on CNDDB, Query.
   - Note that *RareFind 4* is optimized for use in Internet Explorer, but it does work in Mozilla Firefox, Safari and other browsers, just not as well.

4. ***CNDDB Training Classes in Sacramento – every month***
   - CNDDB and BIOS staff now provide training classes every month at the DFG Training Office in Sacramento (at OTD, 1740 North Market Blvd., Sacramento). The class is from 9am-4pm and includes in-class exercises. The classes are open to DFG staff (free) and to any outside clients (fee applies). For more information and the class schedule and fees, see this page: http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/cnddb/training.asp

5. ***CNDDB and Spotted Owl Layer in BIOS – Online access to GIS data***
   - Many of you already know about "BIOS," (Biogeographic Information and Observation System), but for those that still don't, you may want to try out this Internet mapping product. Subscribers have access to this online ArcIMS map viewer with information for both the CNDDB and the Spotted Owl as well as several hundred other digital data layers. Although BIOS works in any browser, it is optimized for Internet Explorer.
   - CNDDB in BIOS is accessible from: http://bios.dfg.ca.gov/ using this button CNDDB/Spotted Owl Viewer . Use the same User Name/Password combination that you already use to access CNDDB data updates.
   - The viewer is very simple to use. A tutorial is available here: http://bios.dfg.ca.gov/tutorials.asp .
   - Many CNDDB subscribers have requested access to the USFWS's Critical Habitat layers; these are available in BIOS along with many other useful layers.
   - CNDDB in BIOS is a quick way to view CNDDB records, examine other GIS data in the BIOS library, and to make maps. We encourage you to use this tool in your work.

- Your feedback is important to us. Please email us at BDB@dfg.ca.gov with your comments after trying the new viewer.

6. *New Online Field Survey Form under Development*
- CNDDB staff is working with DFG Information Technology Branch staff to develop a new online field survey form and mapping application for use by anyone interested in submitting data to the CNDDB. The new form will be a fully functional Internet data form (not a fill-outable PDF like the current one) with mapping capability (points, lines and polygons). It will be customized for species type with a diverging point at the start that provides the user with one version or the other, depending on the species chosen at the beginning. An estimated release date is not known at this time. Stay tuned!

7. *Desert Data Call*
- The CNDDB is currently updating areas of the Mojave and other deserts (Sonoran and Great Basin) that have not been updated in many years. If you have data on desert species, particularly on Mojave rare species, please consider submitting your data to us as soon as you can. This updating is being done in support of DFG work on environmental review with respect to solar and wind energy project proposals.

8. *Submitting data to the CNDDB*
- Submitting your original field data to the CNDDB on rare species is the single best way to support our efforts. Since our job is to track all California rare species, our thin staff perform little or no field work. We rely on you to help us update the occurrences in the CNDDB and to add new occurrences. Therefore, repeat field visits to known sites are as important to us as are new occurrences.
- Detailed information on the best ways to submit data to the CNDDB can be found on our website:
  http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/cnddb/submitting_data_to_cnddb.asp
- Some data submitters may find that it is easier to submit a digital table of data rather than filling out individual field survey forms. Researchers with scientific collecting permits may find this particularly helpful. The CNDDB does not require field survey forms for every occurrence. If your rare species data currently are housed in a database or Microsoft Excel table, you may simply submit that data in its native form. The same goes for shapefiles you have created. Just make sure we can decipher your field names and that all necessary fields are included. For spatial data, be sure to include the datum used.
- What are the "necessary fields?" The minimum fields would include the usual "who, what, when and where." Additional fields of great use to the CNDDB include population size, either estimated or counted, site condition, occurrence rank estimate (A-D), associated habitat, associated species, and for animals, the type of occurrence/observation: roost, nest, burrow, breeding area, rookery, wintering site, and the type of behavior at the site (nesting, foraging, perching, etc.).