California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CNDDB Online Field Survey Form
Frequently Asked Questions

California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California Natural Diversity Database
November 2016

Q: I tried to look at the new Online Field Survey Form (Online FSF), but I was asked to log in. How can I start submitting data?

A: Users must first have an account set up with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). To create a new account we need your name, mailing address, and email address (at a minimum) so that we can contact you if questions arise regarding the data you submit to us. New CDFW accounts can be created at
https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/myaccount/Register.aspx

Q: When I tried to open the Online FSF all I got was an error message. What happened?

A: If you were already logged in to our system under either the cnddb_com or cnddb_gov account to access our data you will need to log out first and then log back in using your personal Online FSF profile.

Login

You are already logged in as cnddb_com@dfg.ca.gov — Logout instead?

⚠ You may have been redirected here because you are attempting to access a resource that you do not have permission to.
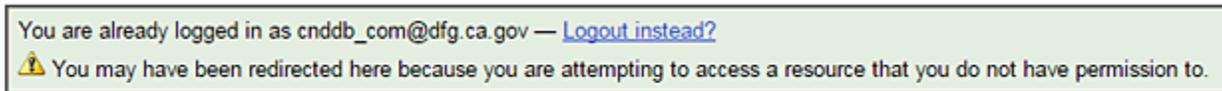
Email or Username: [   ]
Password: [   ]
[Login] *

If you get this error message, you can click the "Logout instead?" link to log out of the general CNDDB account. You can then log back in using your personal Online FSF account.

Q: How will my personal information be handled?

A: CDFW account information and Online FSF data are stored on our secure servers. These servers are maintained in accordance with the current regulations for California state government information security and reliability, and all our records are regularly backed up. We will never release your personal information to online vendors or engage in any similar, inappropriate activity.

Q: I couldn't select the species that I wanted to submit data for. Why?

A: The Online FSF application will only accept data for species tracked by the CNDDB. These species are listed in the CNDDB Special Plants List and CNDDB Special Animals List available at: https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDB/Plants-and-Animals

The Online FSF interface will allow users to choose only from the current list of scientific names or common names given in the CNDDB Special Plants List and CNDDB Special Animals List. If the species you want to submit data for is not being displayed in the Online FSF, please double-check that you are using the common name and/or scientific name currently used by the CNDDB. Note that for many species, common names are not standardized, so different people may use different common names for the same species.

Q: What types of coordinates can I enter? Why did I get an error message when I entered mine?

A: The "Enter coordinates" tool will accept coordinates in the following formats for the NAD83, NAD27, or WGS84 datums:

- Decimal degrees (-117.10353, 36.58077)
- Degrees decimal minutes (-117 6.2115, 36 34.8463)
- Degrees minutes seconds (-117 6 12.69, 36 34 50.78)
- UTM zone 10 or 11 (490738, 4048373)

It is important to know what format your coordinates are in. Note that all four sets of coordinates shown above represent exactly the same location in NAD83.

When typing in coordinates, do not use any letters and do not include signs for minutes or seconds. If you enter coordinates and get an error message saying your coordinates are outside of acceptable geographical bounds you may have:

- Reversed your coordinates (i.e., typed your longitude into the latitude box);
- Added unnecessary punctuation (i.e., a quotation sign to indicate seconds);
- Entered letters (i.e., typed "mE" to indicate easting);
- Entered correct coordinates for a site which is outside of California.

Please double-check your coordinates if you receive an error message.

Q: I would like to draw some polygons to represent the extent of the population I found. Can I do that?

A: This version of the Online FSF allows users to draw a single point to represent the site of each animal survey, and one or more points to represent each plant survey. Later versions of the interface may allow users to draw polygons. For the time being, we encourage you to go to the attachments tab and add other supporting documents and/or maps to your submission if you need to convey a more detailed spatial extent than can be represented with points.

Q: What kinds of documents can I attach to my submission?

A: We encourage you to attach any documents you feel would be useful for the CNDDB to have along with your Online FSF. Some suggestions are:

- Photos of the organism and/or its surroundings
- Spreadsheets of GPS coordinates
- Scanned copies of hand-drawn location maps
- Geodatabase files, zipped shapefiles, KMLs, or similar GIS data
- Separate reports which summarize the same field work but include additional important details

We can accommodate attachment files that are up to 27 megabytes in size. We accept many types of file uploads, but due to security concerns there are some types of files which cannot be uploaded directly onto our servers. You may receive an error message if you try to attach an unapproved file type. Please contact us at CNDDB@wildlife.ca.gov if you have files that you cannot upload, yet you feel we should have them for supporting documentation.

Q: How can I verify that the CNDDB received what I submitted?

A: A user can generate a PDF report of any record they have submitted through the Previous Submissions screen. This can be done either immediately after submitting a record or at a later time. Users can be confident that any record they can see within their previous submission table has been received by the CNDDB. Any separate file attachments can also be viewed or downloaded from the same table. Each user can only see the data submitted through their account. Data sent in by other users will not be visible. Note that once a record has been submitted to the CNDDB it cannot be edited later.

Q: How can I make a change to a record I submitted last month?

A: A user who discovers that data which was previously submitted was done so in error, or who has more information to add to a submission, should do so by sending an email to: CNDDB@wildlife.ca.gov. When contacting us regarding changes to an existing Online FSF submission, please reference the unique Source Code for that record. This code is shown on the table of your previous submissions as well as the top right corner of each Online FSF PDF report.

Q: What happens to my data after I submit it?

A: Within a few days of your submission, a CNDDB staff member will review your submission to check for any obvious issues. Typically, all data submitted to the CNDDB is approved without incident, but in certain circumstances (such as when a submission appears to be substantially out-of-range for the species) you may be contacted for additional information. Due to the large number of species tracked by the CNDDB, submitted data may not be evaluated for inclusion into the CNDDB occurrence database

for some time. However, by checking the Previous Submissions tab on the Online FSF, you can be confident that the data you submitted has been received.

Q: I submitted my Online FSF but why do I not see the information in RareFind?

A: The CNDDB tracks a large number of plant and animal species across the state. RareFind displays data from the CNDDB occurrence database. Any data submitted to the CNDDB is entered into our source database (with a basic bibliographic record, plus quad and county information) but the data is not evaluated for inclusion within our occurrence database until a CNDDB staff person updates that species. It can be quite some time before a species is updated; however, if you need the data entered into the CNDDB right away, contact us and we can usually get the data entered within a month or two. Note, however, that your data will be viewable via the CNDDB QuickView Tool in BIOS at the beginning of the month following your submission.

Q: What if I encounter a problem with the application, or I can't find an answer to my question?

A: If you think you have found a problem with our application, have further questions, or would simply like to leave feedback regarding your experiences using the Online Field Survey Form, please email us at: CNDDB@wildlife.ca.gov

For more information about the CNDDB, please visit:
https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDB