

BIODIVERSITY CENTRE FOR WILDLIFE STUDIES: DATA AND INFORMATION POLICY

Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies

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Introduction

The Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies (BCFWS; www.wildlifebc.org) supports and encourages conservation and protection of wildlife and their habitats in British Columbia by:

- Creating and managing a permanent database of historical and current wildlife data and information including occurrence and breeding data, literature, photographic files, and personal field diaries.
- Publishing original papers on the natural history, biology, and conservation of British Columbia's wildlife in its bi-annual, peer-reviewed journal, *Wildlife Afield*, and
- Developing and providing summary information and analyses of data contained in the database to support conservation planning and implementation.

BCFWS contributes to conservation cooperatively with government and private data systems that currently exist or are under development. BCFWS is able to acquire and manage data collected by private persons, consultants, or that is published in various scientific and natural history publications. BCFWS also regularly obtains information or data from publicly available sources such as government offices, websites, and reports or other information in the public domain. The BCFWS database covers more than a century for many species, allowing tracking of long-term trends in species' distribution, occurrence, and abundance. Such long-term information is useful for developing, implementing, and measuring the success of conservation activities over time. As a private, non-government organization, BCFWS protects sensitive data because access-to-information laws do not apply.

This document states BCFWS policy regarding ownership, possession, access, and appropriate uses of its database. BCFWS will periodically review this policy to determine if changes are warranted. Comments on the policy may be forwarded to the BCFWS Data Manager (datamanager@wildlifebc.org).

Background

- 1) R. Wayne Campbell, together with Eileen C. Campbell and Westcam Consulting Services, created and maintained a private wildlife database that became the impetus for establishing a Wildlife Data Centre. Their comprehensive database for amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals is unique to British Columbia and is estimated to contain nearly 6-million electronic records for more than 600 species. Supplementary to the database is an extensive library with more than 65,000 articles, books, and journals. On 2 April 2008, Wayne, Eileen, and Westcam provided the database and library as a gift to BCFWS on the condition it is used in accordance with this policy.
- 2) BCFWS is a non-profit charitable organization. There are costs incurred to acquire, compile, process, and make data or information available, costs which BCFWS must recover. This is achieved in part through reasonable fees for service from users of the database or information.
- 3) Pursuant to this policy BCFWS will:
 - a) Manage and improve the existing database and library.
 - b) Enter records from historical hard copy material into the database.
 - c) Continue acquiring new paper and digital records and entering these into the database over the long term.
 - d) Develop agreements or partnerships with

other private or public wildlife data systems to benefit wildlife conservation.

Definitions

Contributor: Individual(s) or organizations providing data and / or information, which they are entitled to provide through ownership or other valid terms.

Data: Original (raw) field observations normally including, at the minimum: name of observer, species name, an indication of abundance, location, and date. Data will normally be provided in electronic or hardcopy formats such as CD's, diaries, notebooks, correspondence, photographs, survey forms, and other similar items.

Database: The total digital, hardcopy, and photographic data and information owned by or in possession of BCFWS.

Data Manager: An individual given authority to implement this policy by BCFWS Directors.

Directors: Persons elected as Directors of BCFWS.

Information: Interpretations developed by BCFWS based on analysis of the database.

Wildlife: Vertebrate species other than fishes. Native species are the conservation priority however data on introduced or invasive species are also included because of potential value to management.

BCFWS Data and Information Policy

Data ownership

- 1) Data provided by contributors remains their property, unless ownership was transferred to BCFWS via means such as gifting, purchase, or bequest.
- 2) The Data Manager will require that all contributors sign a standard *Data Use Agreement* [see Page 212], which will provide that their data

may be used by BCFWS to meet it's mandate and the needs of it's users.

- 3) At the written request of the contributor to the Data Manager, all original data, other than those whose ownership was transferred, will be returned in the same format as contributed. The contributor may also request removal of the data from the digital database if it has been entered. Such requests will require the completion of a new *Data Use Agreement*. Contributors will provide reasonable notice, normally at least 90 days.
- 4) Once data appears in the public domain (for example in publications) it is not possible to return it or prevent further use.
- 5) Data obtained by BCFWS from public sources remains public property.

Data acceptance

- 1) BCFWS will not accept data if, in the opinion of the Data Manager, either of these conditions apply:
 - a) The contributor is not legally or ethically able to provide the information.
 - b) The data does not fulfill the minimum standards of the BCFWS database.

Information ownership

- 1) Information produced by BCFWS through analysis of contributed or publicly obtained data is the property of BCFWS unless published in a public forum, or granted to another body.

Acknowledgements

- 1) Anyone using data or information provided by BCFWS will acknowledge that BCFWS provided it. BCFWS may request that users acknowledge specific individuals that contributed a particularly large amount of data or information.

- 2) BCFWS will gratefully acknowledge private and public sources of data or information it uses in its products.
- 3) BCFWS may publish, for example in *Wildlife Afield*, an acknowledgement of a particularly large amount of data received from a contributor.

Data and information possession

- 1) The Data Manager will provide contributed raw data to other parties only when consistent with the contributor's requirements as stated in the *Data Use Agreement*.
- 2) BCFWS acquires and possesses data from sources available to the general public.
- 3) BCFWS normally retains copies of all information it develops and provides to others.

Appropriate data use

- 1) The Data Manager will make best efforts to ensure that use of contributed data is consistent with the *Data Use Agreements*, including when ownership has been transferred to BCFWS.
- 2) BCFWS provides data or information for purposes that are not likely to harm conservation of species, habitats, or ecosystems. Requests that in the opinion of the Data Manager could harm conservation, for example precise locations of endangered species, are denied.
- 3) Potential users include academic researchers, conservation groups, government offices, wildlife and environmental consultants, resource industries practicing conservation, the media, and naturalists or other persons.

Access to data or information

- 1) The Data Manager will require all persons, agencies or groups requesting data or information to sign a standard *Data and Information Request Form*, which will describe the request and

include conditions consistent with the intent of this policy.

- 2) The type and amount of data provided will be consistent with the needs of the request. Copies of the entire database, entire species' databases, or entire regional databases, will not normally be provided.
- 3) The Data Manager will normally require recipients to pay a reasonable amount to cover expenses incurred by BCFWS in providing data or information services. Normally the amount will be based on the number of hours required by BCFWS to service the request, possibly including the time needed to enter data into the digital database.
- 4) BCFWS recognizes that anyone has the right to access publicly available information funded by government, or made freely available by any individual or body. BCFWS may request reimbursement of its time and costs in obtaining, managing and analyzing information obtained from public sources. Persons not willing to reimburse BCFWS costs are free to obtain the information from the public sources.
- 5) Directors, the Data Manager, or members of BCFWS do not have any special or unique rights to the BCFWS database.
- 6) The Data Manager will forward problem requests to BCFWS Directors for review and decision.
- 7) A person who disagrees with a decision made by the Data Manager may request, in writing, that the Data Manager forward the request to the Directors for reconsideration.
- 8) Directors will decide on forwarded requests by vote, and the Data Manager will act on that decision.

Upon death of a contributor

- 1) Ownership of data remains the property of the contributors' estate, and the *Data Use Agreement* will continue to apply.
- 2) BCFWS may obtain ownership of data when bequeathed or gifted to BCFWS or otherwise legally transferred from the estate.

In the event of dissolution of the Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies

- 1) BCFWS Board of Directors will search for a suitable non-profit organization to transfer the data and information to.
- 2) If a suitable organization cannot be found within 1 year, BCFWS will, to the extent practicable, return all original data to the contributors within six months, and provide information to a suitable library.
- 3) Directors, the Data Manager, or any other person associated with BCFWS will not keep any data or information following dissolution. However, any of these persons associated with BCFWS will have all original data or information they contributed returned in event of dissolution.
- 4) The Directors do not assume liability if the data and information cannot be returned or housed following dissolution.

*Approved: Board of Directors, BCFWS
28 April 2008*



Over the past 100 years, the Brown-headed Cowbird has “invaded” nearly every corner of British Columbia, potentially impacting hundreds of host species and populations. BCFWS databases can track changes in distribution and abundance, and assess the frequency and range of host species parasitism. 5 May 2007 Reifel Bird Sanctuary, Westham Island, BC. (Michael I. Preston).



Some information in the Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies databases will be classified as sensitive, such as the precise locations of den sites for Grizzly Bears, and will only be released where it directly benefits conservation of the species. 55 km north of Fireside, BC. 18 June 2007 (R. Wayne Campbell).