



Taxonomy for Ghana's development and conservation - assessing the needs
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Taxonomy: its practice, products and benefits

Presentation for the Ghanaian
Taxonomic Needs Assessment
First Workshop



Resources

Around the world there are:

- Millions of specimens of animals, plants and microorganisms held in collections, each with information of where and when it was collected;
- Libraries, with publications in many languages;
- Databases on cards and on the web;
- Experts in most groups, working in museums, universities, botanic gardens, culture collections and advisory agencies.

What do taxonomists do?

- Try to find out what we share the planet with
 - with these named, they can be managed – their behaviour recorded, their distribution plotted, the plants they feed on associated with them (as long as the plants have names), the diseases they spread linked with them (as long as the disease organisms have names), control measures put in place, protection.....
- To think about:
 - What species do you need named?
 - Do you know all of the species you come into contact with?

What do taxonomists do?

- Make sure the names are correct
 - As taxonomists work names change (e.g. synonymy, discovery of new relationships)
 - People use local names, which may or may not have a 1:1 relationship to 'scientific' names
 - Valuable to keep names up to date and associations between names
- To think about:
 - What do you need to know about names?
 - How up to date do you need them?
 - How can this happen?

What do taxonomists do?

- Provide aids for identification of what is known
 - e.g. keys, field guides, identification cards, computer based keys etc
 - generally based on systematic groups of species, and geographic areas
 - expert advice and identifications can be provided
- To think about:
 - What part of biodiversity do you want to identify?
 - How do you get identifications done?
 - How rapidly do you need specimens identified?



What do taxonomists do?

- Survey, assess and collect
 - collection of specimens is increasingly structured, and linked to surveys and assessments
 - range of techniques
- To think about:
 - what surveys and assessments do you use or need?
 - What techniques do you use?
 - How are specimens collected identified?

What do taxonomists do?

- Build collections of specimens
 - These are a reference for future identifications (types)
 - All specimens have location and date data, and perhaps more
- To think about:
 - What collections might you need or refer to?

What do taxonomists do?

- Provide information on distribution and ecology
 - specimen data can be associated to climatic or geological or soil data etc to predict distributions or discover associations
 - Applications include management of reserves, environmental impact assessments, invasive species, GMOs
- To think about:
 - How might this be useful to your work?