

NCPARC RIMM WORKING GROUP MEETING
UNC-GREENSBORO
APRIL 5, 2006

1:10 pm

Attendees: Mike Dorcas, Steven Price, Lori Williams, Alvin Braswell, Grover Barfield, Dennis Herman, Jeff Beane, Dave Stefan, Ed Corey, Veronica Miller, Kim Coffey, Ann Somers, John Groves, Kendrick Weeks, Sarah Cross, Zach Orr

MD: welcome, distributed meeting agendas; introductions

MD: we'll go through the agenda within a limited amount of time today

AB: one other thing we might want to discuss, about protocols? A new person working now at the museum brought this topic up this morning in an e-mail (re: Hilton Pond, nature center); he (Charles Yelton) inquired about NCPARC sampling protocols; of course, we don't have any, officially, yet; we may want to approve certain protocols, and we could touch on this in the bibliography project

MD: yes, an example is Ann's box turtle work (protocol) that could be put on the NCPARC website

MD: anything else to add to today's agenda?

SC: Zach's meeting? We should follow up on that meeting? Also follow up on the box turtle meeting, update on the NCPARC annual meeting, too

MD: some of these agenda items will go rather quickly....let's get started; several people here have expressed interest in the NC bibliography project; some people have expertise on certain species, others have general interest

DH: I've had some people contact me about the bibliography, how it will be structured, etc.; we should include popular or gray lit as well as peer-reviewed journals; we need to target the lay person as an audience, too

Agreement from group....AB: gray literature can go and go and go; we need to draw the line somewhere....agreement from group

DH: we could have separate fields for gray lit; separate searches

AB: gray lit can be research reports

MD: you could also have book chapters

DH: we should not limit papers just to NC, but if the species is found here, then other papers from other states could be included

AB: I agree with Dennis.....if some paper that deals with a technique that we can pull into the bibliography, even though the research did not occur here, I think that would be valuable; if we limit it strictly to NC that will be a much smaller database

MD: if we do make it that broad, then we could get overwhelmed

AB: a separate dataset on techniques?

MD: Jeff Hall may have that database already for techniques; he's been using EndNote already

LW: stay within a ecoregion? Natural history notes about species found in NC, but the note produced elsewhere?

MD: that's the same issue as the mud turtle in Texas.....too broad?

AB: well, computer space is not a problem, since we are talking about Word files; why don't we have separate databases, one for NC, one for species-specific literature, one for techniques, etc. ; that would be more inclusive; we are limited with personnel time anyway

MD: so it sounds like we would have a database in the format outlined on the agenda, but then other people could share their own databases (Ron's snake database, Jeff Hall's techniques database, etc.)

SC: couldn't these be handled just with different fields?

MD: all of this will have to be entered into the database.....in the case that databases are already created, we could make that available to all

SC: I think we should do this in phases....start with the NC database....work in progress

LW: what about the annual reports that the WRC produces?

SC, AB: yes, we would include those in the gray literature

MD: remember, we won't be making the reports themselves available, just the citation

Agreement from the group that the WRC annual reports would be included in the gray lit citations....

MD: what about keywords for searches? They could be added later; when they are added, they would make the database much more usable; standardized lists of keywords?

Similar to Biological Abstracts? In the interim, we need to get the stuff in there...always be a work in progress.

AB: the request to purchase EndNote for the museum is working up through the chain of command; we could offer the permanence, the back up capability, etc. at the museum; we should be able to export the database to the NCPARC website from there; the museum can offer the permanence needed for this project

MD: someone will be responsible for the master database, but everyone can start contributing their parts now; text delimited files would work for EndNote

SC: we (WRC) can request EndNote for our home computers

MD: text or comma delimited Excel file would translate easily to EndNote; I'll be support for this on the web-end of this project

EC: will the database "guru" be available to help with EndNote

MD: as this evolves, someone will probably step up and be the "guru"

JB: someone needs to be in charge of receiving all this and checking for duplicates

LW: if I can get EndNote on my computer at home, I could volunteer to serve as the receptor for these citations

MD: OK, so Lori will serve as Bibliography Master; we need to hash out what fields we will need or want; EndNote will give lots of options for fields; some we won't use, others will be good starting points for us; it will give suggested field names, etc.; for keywords, for example, we don't need a keyword that is already in the title of the article

JB: ok, where do we draw the line with gray literature? Children's books? Scutes the Bog Turtle book?

MD: we could think of this database as a source for researchers working on herps in NC...if it could be useful to those doing research in NC, then it should be included

MD: anything else about the bibliography? Lori will be contact person on this and will send out communications to others on the committee

MD: other agenda item...beta version of the herp atlas is ready to be viewed; Steve and I can show this to you; go home and test it out with some data and give feedback within the next 2 weeks; the atlas will include SC, too; Carolina atlas

SP: overview of atlas; PowerPoint demo.....atlas will provide overview of species distribution; each person can go back and look at his/her own records; others can access the info on the county level; first, you would register as a user and create account; login

on later visits; next, to enter a record...”my herps” link.....(a few errors are showing up as Steve does the demo)...example entered with snakes records...click on one of the records...(map not showing up)...turn off pop-up blocker....worked! Google maps shows the dots on the map, can zoom in and out...click on dot on map, a little blurb about the record shows up; only the person who entered his/her own data can see this level of detail....layers are roads and aerial views; can scroll around the state;

MD: let’s enter a record as an example....”my herps”...those are my records...click “add record”...all the fields you entered when you registered will show up; pick the state you are in, the county, the herp group, the genus, the species....it automatically QC’s the genus and species to avoid errors....also get the common name....could link to Davidson web page to give info about the species...date....time of day....location? “show instructions” on how to enter this info....text description for location....coordinates...UTMs...can enter address on Google map, and it will zoom there and put a dot on the map

SC: what if the person doesn’t know the scientific name?

MD: good question...maybe we could provide a link for people to look that info up.....ok, back to the map....can click on the spot on the map, it brings up coordinates for you, and you can submit those to the database....can also browse and submit a photo...upload a photo...it will downsize the photo to a reasonable size for the website....click “submit” and you can then view your own records

EC: is there some way to go through and search on key words?

AB: a county level map?

MD: if you want any more level of detail, you would submit a request to the administrator.....

JG: what about multiple individuals of the same species at the same site?

MD: that kind of info would be entered once; and comments added

JG: could I plot all the box turtle locations at the zoo?

MD: yes, you could do that level of detail; it won’t hurt the system; the good thing about Google maps is the aerial layers, especially around bigger cities

DH: a basic question....how does our own data benefit anyone else? How is it not a duplicate of my own databases and maps?

MD: this will definitely benefit administrators and researchers and managers....eg. D.O.R. records for turtles

Discussion in group about hypothetical questions....about reliability of data...confidence of data?

MD: the question is two-fold....with the county level maps, what we are providing is a map of all the records turned in or reported....a disclaimer paragraph to deal with the uncertainty of the data....not verified?

More discussion....flags and QC protocols of “catching” poor or suspect data....erroneous entries....administrators could get an e-mail that is triggered by the QC mechanisms...similar to how the museum would handle things...

EC: what about subspecies? Is there a field for that?

MD: no; might be able to determine subspecies based on map; add that info in comments section

EC: what about subspecies that are in the same area? How deal with that?

AB: state that in the comments section

MD: that could be a legitimate issue for some species....

EC: can anyone else see the photos we upload?

MD: yes, a link to see recently uploaded photos....there is an option you can click to make your photos available to all or to make your photos unavailable

JG: so we can go ahead and enter valid data now?

AB: does the general public have access to this now?

MD: the public does not know the URL, but it is out there right now; I'll send an e-mail reminder to you all about sending comments to me

SC: this website as a tool to involve citizen scientists? Besides providing benefits to biologists and managers?

MD: absolutely

SC: way to state the quality of data and of the observer?

MD: yes, we can do that.

GB: is this similar to what the Heritage program has?

EC: yes, the Heritage program has that

AB: they only track species, ones that are listed as rare or special concern, etc.; this is a tool that could thrill a kid and really get them interested

Agreement....discussion.....

LW: we need to get a press release out about this and/or an article for the Wildlife magazine, etc. to spread the word once everything is up and running

Agreement and discussion about partners....new addition to museum that will specifically target citizen-scientists...etc.

MD: let's move on after a quick break....

MD: Lori with box turtle reporting form....

LW: this initiative came out of the box turtle conservation workshop 2 weeks ago...we want to keep up with box turtle observations, to identify hot spots for road crossings, etc....these data can go in the herp atlas as well (box turtle reporting form passed out to group)

Comments and discussion about box turtle observations...how far back do we want data? Also, other comments and discussion from group about different datums and coordinate systems on the herp atlas, etc.....

MD: update on CASP?

KW: 31 routes have been assigned.....33 volunteers...only 16 have passed the quiz....some are retaking....7 routes left to ground truth....maps passed out

MD: the CASP website has been updated recently, too

SP: a habitat form to go along with the routes? Should I send an example of this form out to everyone?

Yes, discussion from group.....how often to fill these forms out? Once a year adequate?

JG: was there training for the frog routes this year?

SC: next year, we will do a training session in each region for more volunteers

MD: the next thing.....Steve and I brainstormed a list of things to be included in this....a registry of NC herpetologists doing research within the state...online.....available for folks to see who is doing what.....various fields for contact info, taxa, techniques, regions where the work is being done, etc.....I'll send another e-mail out about this topic....submit comments to me

MD: the next thing....Sarah? Kingsnake issue? E-mail Sarah if interested in this topic....

SC: explanation of background of this issue....decline in kingsnake populations? Need for a working group or task force? Meeting coming up?

AB: yes, I'd say there have been definite declines in kingsnakes in NC...it's not unique to kingsnakes, however.a barometer for many snake species

SC: I'll send the info to anyone interested about any upcoming meetings....

MD: other issues...training workshop for professionals...how to monitor and survey for herps? This could be a big topic....let's bring this up at the next meeting and make it the first thing on the agenda

EC: NC Parks wants to do this at The Summit facility in the near future

MD: next issue...Ron Sutherland's issue with NC Herp Hotspots idea...Ron is looking for help to establish a Herp Hotspots designation.....

AB: Ron's focus is on private lands

MD: Zach....diamondback rattlesnake conservation meeting.....update?

ZO: we've been talking with several landowners who have suitable properties...Jeff Hall will be involved, too....burn schedules on industrial forest (good time to look for rattlesnakes)....I'll keep everyone posted...

MD: will you write up a paragraph to be put on the NCPARC website?

JG: summary of box turtle meeting.....2nd Annual meeting....this one held at the Asheboro Zoo....follow up from 1st meeting held in the northeast...all box turtles in the US are now the focus of this workshop...talks were given, working groups were split up (research, education, repatriation)...20-30 projects identified...I'm working on a summary of the meeting...presenters will provide a summary of what they did...will be published...3rd meeting will likely be held in Austin, TX...we hope this will continue to increase awareness and focus attention on all box turtles, to influence legislature, etc.....lots of info is being compiled and collected on box turtles...the meeting was a big success

MD: fill us in, Sarah, on the NCPARC annual meeting?

SC: the last annual meeting was held at The Summit; 68 attendees; 3 workshops (Steve Price with frog I.D., Kurt Buhlmann with SE PARC habitat guidelines, Larissa Bailey with data collections, etc.)....summary info will be posted on the website

JB: reminder of the spring NCHS meeting at the Asheboro Zoo

MD: next RIMM meeting? Wait until fall? August 30, 2006 at UNC-G at 1pm....

Adjournment: 3:20 pm