

GBIF, Spider Club of Zimbabwe and You!

The mission of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) with its Secretariat in Copenhagen, Denmark is to facilitate free and open access to biodiversity data worldwide. The information available is primarily distribution data on plants, animals, fungi and microbes and as well as their up-to-date scientific names. This data can then be used by all interested parties for research, conservation efforts and sustainable development. A noble ideology but how can this be achieved?

Firstly GBIF supports those institutions with collections such as museums and herbaria to make the information locked up in their collections available by funding databasing efforts. There is a separate programme led by GBIF – Biodiversity Information for Development (BID) – funded by the European Union that aims at supporting the nations of sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

And secondly, they have created a portal on their website that links all available biodiversity data on various internet platforms (such as iNaturalist) and places it all in one place which then makes this data easily accessible and searchable. At the point of writing this, there are 1 883 886 225 occurrence records and 60 983 datasets available on this portal.

The Arachnid Department at the Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe, Bulawayo has received a very hotly contested grant from the BID program (18 projects funded out of 215 submissions) for creating a database of their holdings in the protected areas of Zimbabwe. This project runs for two years finishing in March 2023. One of the most important outcomes of this project is to also get the support of the citizens of Zimbabwe to contribute and give additional records. A similar project ran in South Africa (SANSA – The South Africa National Survey of Arachnids) and has resulted in a far greater understanding of species distributions and habitat preferences, many scientific publications, volumes of excellent photographs for use in publications and excellent field guides. We are hoping in the future to produce the same for our Zimbabwean spiders.

To try to achieve as complete a record as possible everyone can get involved and here is how - **It is really simple!**

Take a photograph using as high a resolution as possible and then do one of three things

- Either send the photograph to moirajane.fitz@gmail.com Include on the photo label the date, locality and habitat.

Or

- sign up on iNaturalist, a really easy program to use and post your pictures straight to this platform and they will automatically be uploaded to the Spiders of Zimbabwe Project and the GBIF portal.

Or

- Join **The Spider Club of Zimbabwe** Facebook page and post your pictures there.