



iabin
Inter-American Biodiversity
Information Network

IABIN Invasives Information Network (I3N)

Integrating Invasive Species Data from the Western Hemisphere

I3N, the IABIN Invasives Information Network, provides grants and training for sharing data.

Invasive alien species (IAS) are one of the main causes of biodiversity loss and threats to agriculture. Successful early detection, prevention, and management of IAS and their impacts require international cooperation and sharing of information, technology, and tools. In the Americas, IAS information is often nonexistent, unavailable, inaccessible, or incompatible with other data sets. The IABIN Invasives Information Network (I3N), the first Thematic Network established by the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN), facilitates cooperation on IAS information discovery, collection, management, and distribution, and provides education and training on the use of tools developed and freely distributed by the I3N. Coordinated by the National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) of the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the I3N is an internationally recognized example of successful national and regional collaboration and sharing on an issue of global significance.

The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity "... welcomes the 'I3N' and calls on the Global Environment Facility, Parties, Governments, and relevant organizations to support and participate in these initiatives." (CBD Decision VI/23)

Starting an IAS Network for the Americas

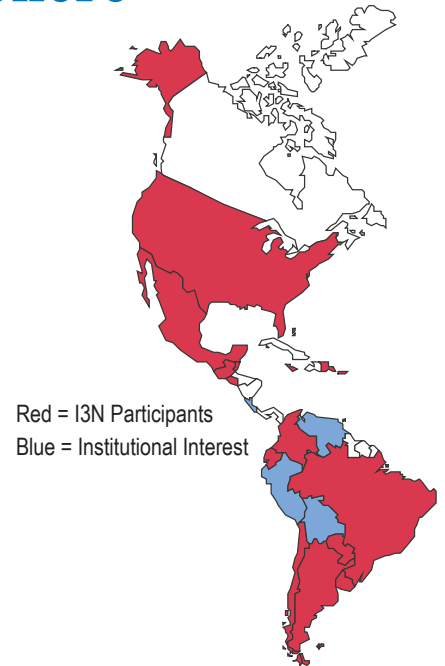
Initiated in 2002 as a series of pilot projects sponsored by IABIN and funded by the U.S. State Department and USGS, the NBII began to develop tools for the collection and exchange of IAS information in the Americas. Twelve organizations, each representing a different country, participated in the pilot projects. Using I3N tools and the Internet, they began to collect IAS data, publish records on the Web, and implement common technology and taxonomy standards. To support the continued growth of the I3N pilot project, the NBII

developed and hosted a trilingual I3N Web site, a search tool, an online collaboration community, and an I3N e-mail listserv — all of which continue to operate in support of the I3N today. Due to the success of the I3N, organizations in Morocco, Ghana, Gambia, Ethiopia,

Seychelles, Portugal, Bangladesh, China, and Sri Lanka have now indicated their interest in using the I3N tools.

I3N Database on Invasive Alien Species Template

The I3N Database on Invasive Alien Species template (available in Spanish,



Contact information for National Leads can be found at <i3n.iabin.net>

Portuguese, and English) is a Microsoft Access™ -based product that allows network members to collect and share standardized information on IAS taxonomy, introduction, biology, ecology, impacts, control methods, occurrence (including geographic data), contacts, projects, and references. Developed through



Invasive pigs are reported by all I3N countries.

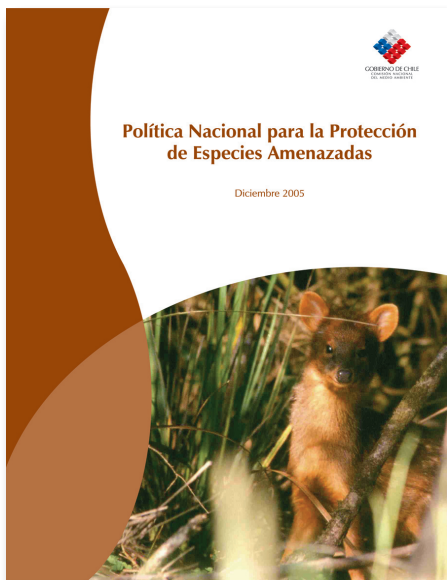
Photo credit: USGS

a partnership between the NBII, I3N-Brazil, and I3N-Argentina, the *I3N Database* template incorporates multiple capabilities in a single tool, allowing I3N members to collect, manage, export, and exchange standardized data. The tool's free availability eliminates the need to purchase software and hire computer programmers and design consultants to develop a national IAS database — a barrier that is often cited as a limiting factor in the development of national IAS information databases in the Americas.

The I3N provides free Internet hosting and global Internet access to IAS records created by member countries, who are encouraged to publish their IAS records on their own Web site or on the central I3N Web site. This makes the records available to the I3N search tool, which allows users to search all of the online I3N data sets simultaneously.

Standards

The *I3N Database* template was designed to comply with the Dublin Core and Darwin Core Metadata Standards, uses the Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS) as a taxonomic authority, and incorporates standardized vocabulary for habitat terminology developed



I3N participants support national policy processes.

Retaining Data Ownership

Local expertise in collecting, managing, and disseminating invasive species information is essential. Because data on IAS in any one country represent the efforts of a heterogeneous group of participants, I3N supports a distributed network of in-country data providers, rather than a centralized system. Each country's information is controlled by that country but is provided to the international public through the Internet in a standard format.

by NatureServe. The taxonomy and habitat terms can be tailored to a particular country. Compliance with these basic standards ensures that data sets created using the *I3N Database* template are compatible and, therefore, exchangeable among network members and other international data providers.

Making Data Accessible and Searchable

The *I3N Database* template allows database owners to export their IAS records in the widely accepted Extensible Markup Language (XML). The template is delivered with built-in functionality for generating XML-tagged species fact sheets, and for producing trilingual reports consisting of detailed or summary species lists, projects, and contacts from the database. Users can also modify the template to produce reports tailored to their specific needs. The XML tags are based on the Dublin Core Metadata Standard as adapted through consultations with IAS experts.

The XML-tagged files can be published on a Web server. The data providers retain complete control over their databases and can add, change, hide, and delete information at will. I3N members decide how to publish and display the information, which they can do on their own Web site or, free of charge, on the I3N Web site maintained by the NBII. The I3N search tool (available in Spanish and English) harvests the information and provides a free-text search of IAS

information formatted in HTML, XML, PDF, text, and other common word processing and spreadsheet files.

Training and Grants

I3N has an ongoing program to train information managers from throughout the Americas in the use of the *I3N Database* template and in the importance of collecting standardized data to facilitate information sharing. I3N also provides grants to organizations wishing to make IAS data available through the network.

A Vision for the Future

Participants will continue to discover unsuspected IAS in their countries, develop national IAS lists, and forge mutually supportive relationships with neighboring countries. I3N will continue to expand its network as well as offer funding, training and information services, and new products to help address IAS in the Americas.

I3N participates in a \$6 million, 5-year IABIN project funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF). With GEF funding, the I3N is working to expand the network to new countries. Some future products include a toolkit for decision-makers, a Web template for serving I3N records on the Internet, a mapping tool, and refined search capabilities.

For More Information

Visit the network's home page:

<<http://i3n.iabin.net>>, or

Contact the I3N Coordinator:

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