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Species Identification in Seconds

A new DNA database that will enable swift species identification and aid vital scientific research will be launched at the International Conference for the Barcoding of Life, on Thursday 10 February 2005.

The database, the largest and most comprehensive of its kind in the world, will be the first to hold DNA Barcodes, the standardised DNA sequences of every plant and animal species. The information will make valuable existing information easily available for everyone. It will also hold details from specimens held in collections and will be linked to photographs, descriptions and other important scientific information.

The database underpins the Barcode of Life Initiative and aims to develop an open archive of DNA sequences from specimens held in major collections around the world. Working with the National Center for Biotechnology Information at the US National Institute of Health, the information will be recorded in a new Barcode Section of GenBank*.

The Barcode of Life Initiative offers a standardised way of recording DNA sequences on a global scale. The use of DNA Barcodes along with existing taxonomic information will offer invaluable help to field biologists in identifying known species and cataloguing unknown species.

'Animal and plant information is kept in many different places and can be difficult to get hold of, especially when working in the field,' commented Robert Hanner at the Coriell Institute of Medical Research. 'The database will fundamentally support the Barcode of Life Initiative by providing easily accessible and reliable data. It will help species identification but also open up information held by many of the world's finest natural history museums, herbaria and institutes.'

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Editor notes

* Genbank is an international genetic database. Created in 1982 it contains more than 19,411,770 records each containing sequences and data including sequence description, source organism, sequence length, and references.

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National Centre for Biotechnology Information, USA
Coriell Institute of Medical Research, USA
European Molecular Biology Laboratory Data Library, UK
DNA Data Bank of Japan
Smithsonian Institution, USA

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