

iDigBio's Public Participation Platform Survey

Thank you for taking the time to consider and respond to the following questions. iDigBio will make your responses available to the natural history collections community, both as an online resource available to anyone, and as a reference specifically for participants in our upcoming Public Participation in Digitization of Biodiversity Collections course.

Please return your completed survey to Michael Denslow (michael.denslow@gmail.com). And thank you for your time!

Questions:

1. Name and email of person responding to this survey:

Michael Denslow, michael.denslow@gmail.com

2. Name of public participation platform:

Notes from Nature

3. Website:

notesfromnature.org

4. Company or group responsible for maintaining platform:

Allen Lab at University of Nevada Reno

Guralnick Lab and University of Florida

Notes from Nature is a project on the Zooniverse platform. The platform backend is maintained by the Zooniverse team. The front end and custom data processing algorithms are maintained by the Notes from Nature team.

5. Long-term funding structure for maintaining platform (e.g., grants, membership, private):

National Science Foundation grants have provided much of the software development for the project. Notes from Nature has a membership model for partners that are interested in supporting the project outside of a formal grant structure.

Larger projects/campaigns such as Thematic Collections Networks (TCNs) subcontract for ongoing support.

6. Brief summary highlighting the market niche for this platform:

Our primary data providers are researchers and museums interested in transcription or classification of specimen images.

The vast majority of our partners are from North America, but we are very interested in working with individuals or collections from other areas of the world.

7. Types of biodiversity specimens most common on the platform:

We are interested in supporting all biodiversity specimen types. The most common have been herbarium specimens and pinned insects, but we have featured expeditions focused on fossils, microscope slides, wet collections, fungi and others.

8. Types of tasks supported by the platform (e.g., transcription, measurement, georeferencing):
Transcription, classification and measurement. We have active software development to improve OCR, parsing as preprocessing steps (DigiLeap).

9. Other disciplines that utilize the platform (e.g., camera traps):
Notes from Nature is primarily focused on natural history collections, but we are always open to hear research ideas or other ways that people are interested in using the platform.

10. Example of the types of institutions/collections using your platform:
Our main partners are museums and academic institutions, but we are always open to collaboration with other groups.

11. Any restrictions as to who can use the platform:
None, but the goal is open data / open science so our priority is to work with partners that will make the data and findings public.

12. Primary language(s) supported:
English. We are very interested to collaborate on projects in other languages. Our platform does have some internationalization features.

13. Primary volunteer base or core users of the platform:
We have strong support from the Zooniverse volunteer base as well as volunteers that focus exclusively on Notes from Nature. Every new partner, collaboration and project is an opportunity to reach new volunteers so we always work to broaden our reach and bring in new volunteers.

14. Brief description of method(s) for quality control/quality assurance available on the platform:

The primary aspects of quality assurance on Notes from Nature relate to “help text,” “tutorials” and “Talk.” Help text are the directions that volunteers have access to that explain the task to be completed. Tutorials tend to be more high-level aspects of the overall expedition, it’s goals and themes. Talk is the forum where volunteers can ask questions and provide guidance back to data providers about the clarity of the tasks and any clarifications that might needed. Feedback from volunteers on Talk frequently results in better help text that improves data entry.

The primary aspects of quality control in the system relate to the custom data processing algorithms that are used. For example, most expeditions use a retirement limit of 3 meaning that 3 different users must enter data for the image. These entries are compared and reconciled into a single value or text string. The algorithm also provides data flags and summaries to help data providers understand the results of each expedition.

15. Types of media supported by the platform (e.g., image, video, 3D):

.jpg, .jpeg, .png, .gif, .svg, .mp3, .m4a, .mpeg, .txt, .json

16. File formats supported by the platform. Indicate both input and output as appropriate:

Output files are in .csv and .html format. Some files have embedded JSON

17. Workflow customization available to the user:

The Zooniverse platform provides a wide variety of customization options. You can see many examples on notefromnature.org

18. Costs to collections to use the platform:

There is no cost for setting up an expedition. If partners are interested in their own Notes from Nature “Project” or have interest in many of expeditions then we typically discuss the best way to resource that.

19. Representative for potential users to contact:

notesfromnature.pm@gmail.com

20. Best resources for additional information about the platform (e.g., presentations, brochures, recorded webinars, peer-reviewed papers):

zooniverse.org/lab contains links to ‘how-to’, ‘glossary’, ‘policies’, ‘best practices’, and ‘project builder talk forum’. We also have Notes from Nature specific documentation. However, we have found that it is best to reach out before starting to dive too deeply into the documentation as each project has its own specifics and those can be quickly identified and discussed with an initial conversation.

21. Data ownership or usage policies (e.g., publication, sharing of data, public access):

All Zooniverse code is open source (see <https://github.com/zooniverse>).

<https://help.zooniverse.org/getting-started/lab-policies/> includes our policy around research teams “Make their classification data open after a proprietary period, normally lasting two years from project launch”.