

MSB Division of Fishes Data Sharing Policy

Updated 9 June, 2003

The data maintained in the MSB Division of Fishes databases serves two purposes:

1. To efficiently organize data relevant to the museum collection.
2. To effectively disseminate these data for legitimate, not-for-profit research.

Collections of fishes and their associated data have been entrusted in perpetuity to the MSB Division of Fishes by the Curators, outside researchers, and contracting agencies. Therefore, it is a central part of the Division's mission to exercise great care in the maintenance and release all materials and information under its responsibility.

Requests for data from the MSB Division of Fishes database are reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Curator and/or Associate Curator of Fishes. All requests will be given equal consideration and the Division staff will fill these requests (upon approval) in a timely manner. In general, releases of data are governed by the following provisions:

1. Requests for data will be accepted only in the form of non-electronic mail sent to the Curator of Fishes and must contain the following information (see example letter):
 - Purpose of the researchers' study
 - Description of how the data will be used
 - Researchers' institutional affiliation
 - If requestor is a student, name of the major professor
2. All data released by the MSB Division of Fishes is considered provisional and should be verified by the researchers' direct examination of the specimens.
3. Data will not be released that are actively in use for ongoing research by Division staff, outside researchers, or contracting agencies. Release of these data will be granted by the appropriate personnel upon completion of the study or publication of the research.
4. The MSB Division of Fishes does not supply data "dumps" or grant requests for the transfer or release of extensive information on large numbers of collections.
5. Data sharing or the transfer of data for collaborative study between MSB Divisions or as part of multi-institutional efforts must be approved by the MSB Curator of Fishes.
6. When data from the MSB Division of Fishes are used in published work, the author(s) must acknowledge the collection using appropriate catalogue numbers and supply two copies of the publication for inclusion in the Division's library.

If a request for data is denied, a letter will be sent to the requestor explaining the reason for this decision. The decision to grant access may be reversed by the Curator if the requestor is found to have misrepresented himself and/or his purpose.

Example of letter requesting collection data

Western Mississippi State University
Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
Drawer G
Plantation MS 78690

2 February 2002

Dr. Thomas F. Turner
MSB Division of Fishes
University of New Mexico
Albuquerque NM 87131

Dear Dr. Turner,

I am requesting a list of your *Pimephales promelas* from Socorro County NM for a study I am conducting on geographical variation in the numbers of nuptial tubercles in male fathead minnows. This study will eventually include counting the tubercles of males from different parts of the country and a loan request will be forthcoming. For now, however, I just need collection data for your holdings from Socorro County. Either an electronic format or printout of these data would be appreciated.

My major professor, Dr. John Smith of the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Western Mississippi State University, recommended this study to me for my M.S. thesis. I was also intrigued by the findings in Smith, A.B., et al. 1986 *Fathead minnows show variation in nuptial tubercle counts*, Copeia No. 4 and would like to confirm some of their ideas.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

John A. Doe
Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
Ph. 231-9008 ext. 234