

## **FISHBASE: ENCYCLOPAEDIA AND RESEARCH TOOL**

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FishBase was conceived in 1987 within ICLARM and received large support from the European Commission from 1989 onwards. In 2000, it entered a new phase being managed by a FishBase Consortium, consisting of seven members (The Africa Museum, Tervuren, the Paris and the Stockholm Natural History Museums, FAO, the WorldFish Center (former ICLARM), and the universities of Kiel and British Columbia). The Africa Museum is responsible for the update and verification of all African fish data. Originally FishBase was created to facilitate the transfer of information and knowledge of fishes to the developing countries, but gradually it developed into the largest database on fishes. A FishBase book and CD-ROMs are published, with an update every year, and since 1998 FishBase is freely available on the internet ([www.fishbase.org](http://www.fishbase.org)), with an update every month. The number of hits increased from a few 100.000 in 1999 to about 8 million in November 2003. Information can be searched by common name, scientific name, family, country, ecosystem or numerous other topics. Various foreign scripts are included to facilitate the search option by common name for non-scientists. Scientific publications and data provided by experts form the basis for the information in FishBase. When using FishBase, one is referred to the original scientific publications in order to give credit to the authors. The information can be taxonomical, geographical, ecological or morphological, but also data on reproduction, metabolism, genetics and population dynamics are part of FishBase. Fish collections of more than 30 musea can be consulted on-line and tools such as biogeographical modelling, trophical pyramids, identification keys and fishery statistics can be accessed. Information already available in other databases such as the Catalog of Fishes, LarvalBase, GenBank and the IUCN Red List Database is available through direct species-level links.