Announcing *e-Biosphere 09:*
The International Conference on Biodiversity Informatics
London, 1-5 June 2009 (tentative)

Around the time that the first humans landed on the moon, countries began to realize that their efforts to explore space were better organized and funded than efforts to understand Planet Earth. Since that time, remote sensing, ecosystem studies, biodiversity inventories and other initiatives have assembled enormous bodies of data in computerized databases, now available through the internet. The new field of biodiversity informatics emerged, bringing together data on:

- *species, higher taxonomic units, and their geographic distributions;*
- *specimens preserved in museums, herbaria and other repositories; and*
- *observations on organismal properties such as digital images and gene sequences.*

The information that is now becoming available, thanks to biodiversity informatics, is revolutionizing research in biology and is opening new approaches to managing natural resources, promoting sustainable development, and protecting biodiversity and the environment. The most exciting development in biodiversity informatics over the past 5-10 years has been the growth of interconnections among these databases. Developers of large research databases and data sharing networks are creating a seamless global web of biodiversity information, enabling a new generation of integrative research and diverse new and exciting applications.

This emerging field will be the subject of ***e-Biosphere 09: The International Conference on Biodiversity Informatics***, a five-day conference in London[1]. The conference will be divided into two segments: an open meeting to engage users and developers, followed by a smaller planning meeting. The first three days of the conference will be an open meeting at which;

- *Database developers will see and discuss the emerging connectivity among databases;*
- *Researchers will hear about and see the state of the art in biodiversity informatics; and*
- *Officials from government agencies and NGOs will learn how biodiversity informatics provides a new scientific basis for policy decisions in conservation, agriculture, sustainable development and land management.*

Presentations, software demonstrations, panel discussions, and open discussions will:

- *Demonstrate the latest capabilities for integrative research across diverse data types;*
- *Highlight the discoveries that have been enabled by integrative biodiversity informatics;*
- *Present practical applications in policy, regulation and management; and*
- *Give users and potential users of biodiversity information an opportunity to provide input to database developers and operators on their needs and priorities.*

The results of the open meeting will set the stage for a smaller two-day planning meeting. Invited representatives of the most active biodiversity informatics initiatives will develop an integrative roadmap for the coming decade of work in biodiversity informatics and agree to a collaborative plan of action.

The organizing committee invites expressions of interest from leaders of initiatives across the full spectrum of biodiversity informatics. Planning for the ***e-Biosphere 09*** conference is in its early stage and wide participation is welcome. Please contact inquiries@e-biosphere09.org.

[1] e-Biosphere 09 is being hosted by The Natural History Museum London and is being organized by a partnership among the world's major biodiversity informatics initiatives: Encyclopedia of Life, Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF); Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS); European Distributed Institute of Taxonomy (EDIT); Catalogue of Life; Consortium for the Barcode of Life (CBOL); BioNET-INTERNATIONAL; Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN); J.R.S Biodiversity Foundation, Australian Commonwealth Scientific and Research Organization (CSIRO).