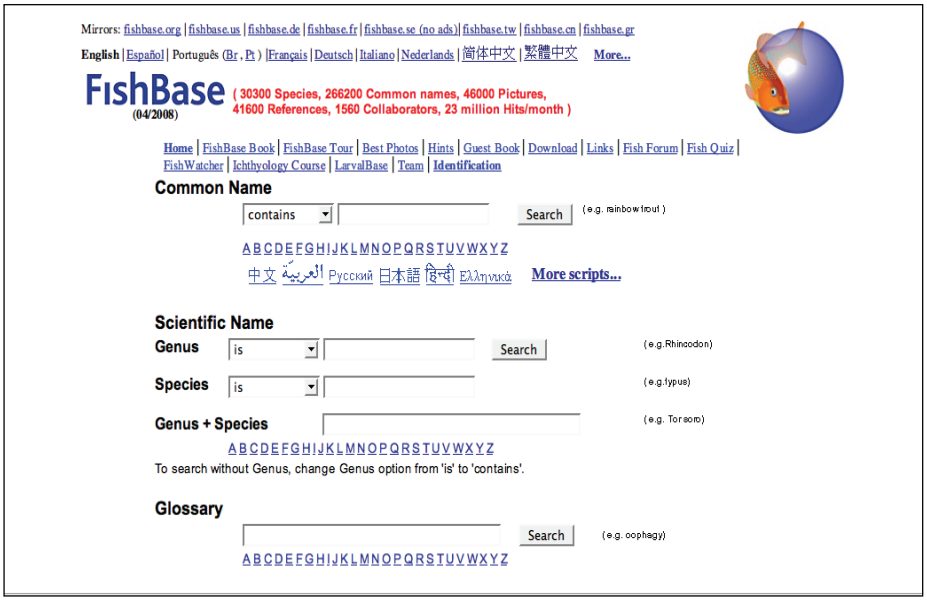
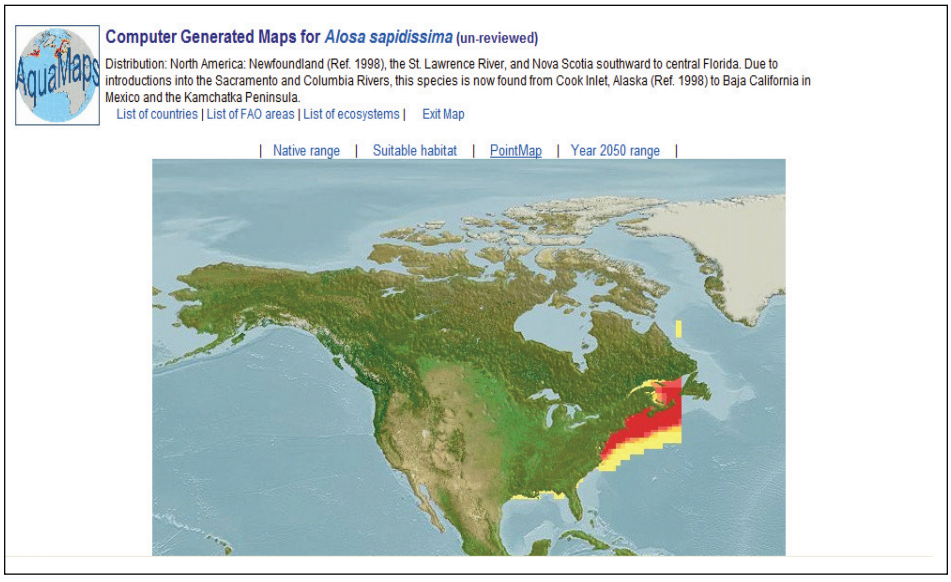
FishBase for the Americas: Improving Access to Western Hemisphere Fisheries Information

Creating a trilingual search capability on the Web to provide users better access to information on Western Hemisphere fishes

Fisheries status and trends data in the Americas are incomplete and not widely accessible. This situation is being addressed through a new service provided by a partnership of FishBase, the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN), and the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (FAR) Node of the U.S. National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII).

The partnership makes fisheries data and information more easily accessible for the Western Hemisphere natural resource community by adapting and linking to existing data sets for Western Hemisphere fishes; digitizing data currently available only on paper; determining freshwater fish distributions; defining relevant geographic searches and species lists; adding common names used in the region; and optimizing Spanish, Portuguese, and French translations for FishBase searches, intermediate pages, and species summaries.





Each partner brings different strengths: FishBase is a global, online, searchable database containing information on over 28,500 freshwater and marine fish species. The site includes scientific and common names, photographs, references, graphs, reports, data, support for ecosystem modeling, and more.

IABIN builds database interoperability and biodiversity informatics capacity, linking national networks, individual institutions, the Clearing-House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Global Biodiversity Information Facility.

FAR is an integrated, comprehensive, Web-based resource that will serve and link to fishery and aquatic resource databases and coordinate efforts to develop data standards.

The new interface was launched in the initial year of the partnership at: <http://www.fishbase.org >.

Recent project activities include using environmental variables for predicting the occurrence of freshwater fishes. A successful pilot testing 20 species in 2007 to create AquaMaps that display North American distribution has led to an effort to complete 600 more species this year.

The partners are currently working to provide:

- Online access to regional fish collections,
- An expanded photo catalog,
- Common names for regional fishes, and
- Metadata for fish data and information.

Your Help Is Requested

As this effort evolves, we are interested in receiving feedback and suggestions from experts in the field. Please contact us if you:

- Want to publicize your fisheries collection data and make them more widely available,
- Are willing to review species life history accounts,
- Can help compile common names for Western Hemisphere fishes,
- Have images of fish species, or
- Are willing to review the Web site for usability in your country.

Your ideas and improvements to this new service are always welcome.

For More Information

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