

ABSTRACT

BERMS, ERMS AND WORMS: COMMUNITY TOOLS TO FACILITATE OUR KNOWLEDGE OF MARINE BIODIVERSITY

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The World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS) celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2017. Over the past ten years, the content of WoRMS has grown steadily, currently containing more than 242,000 accepted marine species names. WoRMS is therefore unique: there is no comparable global database for marine species, which is driven by a large, global expert community, supported by a Data Management Team and can rely on a permanent host institute, dedicated to keeping WoRMS online. The system has seen several user applications, including facilitating local and regional marine species data management and data analysis, but also answering big scientific questions for example about the estimated number existing marine species, providing a metric for how much we do and do not know about life in the oceans.

One of the unique features of WoRMS is that it is containing and integrating over 100 global, 12 regional and 4 thematic species databases integrated within a common taxonomy. This allows regional, thematic or ecological expert groups to focus on specific contents of the database, providing additional information and creating community ownership of a specific subcomponent of WoRMS.

A regional example of WoRMS is BeRMS, the Belgian Register of Marine Species. Published in 2010, this register enabled to provide an inventory of all marine species encountered within the Belgian Exclusive Economic Zone, including the intertidal zone.

Now, a major update of the Belgian Census has started. A major literature review, datamining activities of marine biogeographic databases such as the European Biogeographic Information System (EurOBIS) and additional species surveys are planned in order to complete this register, allowing to provide a nearly complete assessment of the Belgian marine biodiversity.