

Annual Report 2023

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Introduction

The Observation International Foundation was established on December 1, 2015 for the further international development of Observation.org, the digital platform for registration of species observations. At the time of its foundation, there were three national versions of the platform, namely Waarneming.nl, Waarnemingen.be and Observations.be.

The foundation's statutory purpose is to promote the worldwide collection and registration of reliable and verified observational data of flora and fauna. The target group consists of volunteers, professionals and organizations active in the fields of (scientific) nature research, protection of nature and landscape, nature education and regulations for environmental quality. The aim is for the collected data to be optimally available and used for all these purposes. A core activity of the foundation is the management, exploitation and further development of digital platforms and associated mobile applications such as ObsIdentify. A basic principle is that the system developed is freely accessible to everyone and can be used free of charge.

For the international expansion and development of the system, Observation International actively seeks cooperation in Europe and beyond with local, regional or nationally operating organizations and governments. These can join as partners to contribute actively and financially to the further development and promotion of the digital platform in their own environment.

An amendment to the Articles of Association was implemented in 2020 aimed at strengthening and improving the administrative and executive organization. The extension of the amended articles of association provides for a transitional arrangement with a provisional board whose task is, among other things, to form a definitive board by May 2025 at the latest.

Please send questions regarding this report to email address info@observation.org.

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History

2024-06-19 First version published.

Activities

The main activities of Observation.org are focused on collecting, validating and sharing biodiversity data through its technology. In this chapter, we share key metrics for these activities. Additionally, we highlight some noteworthy projects and events.

Data collection

In total, we collected 33.048.732 observations worldwide, a growth of 14% compared to 2022 (29.672.296 observations).

The top 10 countries with the most observations collected in 2023 are:

Country	Number of observations
The Netherlands	14.863.666
Belgium	9.497.719
Germany	2.465.028
France	1.662.966
Spain	1.490.697
United Kingdom	352.614
Austria	300.178
Italy	149.850
Sweden	117.718
Portugal	111.530

Data validation

The number of validators in The Netherlands and Belgium is once again growing. Outside of these countries, we see a huge increase of over 46% compared to 2022. We see this as a clear indicator of success in Europe.

Country	Active in 2023	Δ 2023	Active in 2022	Δ 2022	Active in 2021
The Netherlands	440	6,54%	413	-0,24%	414
Belgium	290	3,20%	281	-3,10%	290
Other	526	46,52%	359	24,65%	288

Data sharing

GBIF

We shared over 85 million occurrences on the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF). This included circa 20 million images and over 60.000 sound files suitable for identification and research purposes.

The Observation.org dataset is the third largest dataset on GBIF. The Dutch data of Observation.org is the largest Dutch dataset on GBIF with over 75 million occurrences.

Improvements to our GBIF export were partly covered by a [project funded by NLBIF](#).

NDFD

Observation.org shares Dutch observations with the Dutch National Database Flora and Fauna (NDFD). In 2022, we shared over 14 million new observations with the NDFD. Observation.org is the largest data provider to the NDFD.

Scientific publications

At least 717 scientific publications published in 2023 used Observation.org data through GBIF. The total number of scientific publications using Observation.org data from GBIF is 2079. Since our Belgian partners publish their data on GBIF through other publishers, the actual numbers are higher. The table below shows the growth over the past 4 years.

Year	Publications
2023	717
2022	588
2021	391
2020	135

We do not actively track scientific publications that use our data through other methods than GBIF.

Mobile apps

We have updated and improved our mobile apps.

- [ObsIdentify](#)
- [ObsMapp](#)
- [iObs](#)

We have also published the first beta of a new cross-platform mobile app Observation, with support from the [Cultuurfonds](#).

European image recognition

Together with Naturalis Biodiversity Center, we improved the quality of our image recognition system NIA (Nature Identification API). The contribution of Observation.org was the annotated dataset (over 90% of the data used for this model) and expert input for general improvement.

Stranding.nl

For the Dutch ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, we built a specific subsite for the registration of stranded seals and cetaceans on the Dutch coast. The first version was published in 2022. In 2023, a start was made to import data from the Naturalis platform walvisstrandingen.nl into Stranding.nl.

Open source software

We have actively maintained the open source software packages below.

To indicate the impact of these packages, we have also included the number of stars the package has on GitHub. More stars means more usage.

- django-marina
 - <https://github.com/zostera/django-marina>
 - 2 stars
- django-bootstrap3
 - <https://github.com/zostera/django-bootstrap3>
 - ~2,300 stars
- django-bootstrap4
 - <https://github.com/zostera/django-bootstrap4>
 - ~1,000 stars
- django-bootstrap5
 - <https://github.com/zostera/django-bootstrap5>
 - 281 stars
- django-icons
 - <https://github.com/zostera/django-icons>
 - 72 stars
- django-modeltrans
 - <https://github.com/zostera/django-modeltrans>
 - 46 stars
- django-tables2
 - <https://github.com/jieter/django-tables2>
 - ~1,700 stars

We have also contributed to other open source software packages through bug reports and code contributions.

Events

Observation International attended the following events.

More events will be added in a future update of this document.

20th EuroBirdPortal Meeting in Brno (Czech republic)

This EuroBirdPortal (EBP) meeting was organized by the Czech Society for Ornithology (CSO) and took place during November 20-21 at the Institute of Vertebrate Biology of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Brno.

This time, the EBP meeting had a different format than previous ones as it included a LIFE EBP Reinforcement workshop aimed to support the completion of the EBP data flow by means of adding all the species recorded in Europe and by properly identifying and characterizing all data submitted using particular protocols (e.g. standard monitoring projects, nocmig, project specific field protocols, etc). Moreover, just after this meeting, during November 22-25, a second LIFE EBP Reinforcement workshop was organized at the same place, though this one only was open to the partners of the seven target countries of the LIFE project in SE Europe (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia).

The meeting was attended by 2 staff members and multiple local users of the platform. The managing director gave a presentation about the platform. Our partners from Wallonia, who are also involved in EBP, presented the advanced monitoring functionality of Observation.org.

Groene Hart Annual Event

At the annual event of the "Green Heart" region of The Netherlands on 7 September 2023. We met with several government officials, administrators and site managers of the region. The platform was presented by our managing director.

Sovon Annual Event

We were present at the annual Sovon event on 25 November 2022. Here we met with hundreds of users from The Netherlands.

New partnerships

This section will be added in a future update.

Sponsoring and business partners

In 2023, we welcomed [BeRound](#) and [Natuurhuisje](#) as the first members of our [Business Club](#).

The merchandise partnership with webshop Veldshop was evaluated at the end of 2023. We concluded that the partnership did not meet the expectations that Veldshop and Observation had, and decided not to continue into 2024.

Governance

Board

During 2022, the composition of the Board was as follows.

Position	Name	Year of appointment
Chairman	Olaf Bánki	2021
Secretary	Henk Schmitz	2021
Treasurer	<i>vacancy</i>	N/A
Member	Szabolcs Nagy	2021

Board interaction was through phone calls, video calls and email. In addition, a combined form of progress meeting and board meeting between chairman, secretary and director Dylan Verheul took place on average biweekly.

We were unable to find a suitable treasurer, the search for a treasurer will continue in 2024.

Global Team

The Global Team consists of representatives from partner organizations and former board members that have been invited to join as experts. The powers, composition and working method of the Global Team are globally regulated in the amended articles of association. In addition to this, the Board and Global Team established internal rules of procedure in 2021 with further agreements on the composition, working method, financial contributions, decision-making and voting rights of this advisory board.

Organisations that have joined Observation International as partners can nominate a representative (head of delegation) to the Global Team. If desired, this official contact person can be accompanied or replaced by a second person (associate delegate) during the meeting.

In addition to the formally appointed members of the Global Team, the following people generally also attended the meetings as advisors or listeners: Dylan Verheul (managing director Observation International), Martine Lemmens (employee of Observation International) and Julio Rabadán González (coordinator for Observation International in Spain).

In 2023, the composition of the Global team was as follows:

Name	Position	Organisation	Country or Region
Olaf Bánki	chairman	Observation International	The Netherlands
Henk Schmitz	secretary	Observation International	The Netherlands
Marc Herremans	head of delegation	Natuurpunt	Flanders, Belgium
Jean-Yves Paquet	head of delegation	Natagora	Wallonia, Belgium
Jean-Sébastien Rousseau -Piot	associate delegate	Natagora	Wallonia, Belgium
Jan-Ole Kriegs	head of delegation	LWL-Museum für Naturkunde	Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany
Peter Kaufmann	head of delegation	Haus der Natur Salzburg	Austria
David Tempelman	expert member	None	The Netherlands
Ulrich Haese	expert member	None	The Netherlands
Szabolcs Nagy	expert member	None	Hungary
Hans Verdaat	expert member	None	The Netherlands
Tineke van Bussel	head of delegation	Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance (DCNA)	Dutch Caribbean

Staff

In 2023, Observation.org had a staff size of 15 people / 10 FTE.

One person was directly employed by Observation International.

13 people were contracted from our long time business partner Zostera.

Two people were contracted from other companies.

Finances

For a report on finances, we refer to the Financial Report 2023 which is published on our website at <https://observation-international.org/en/reports/financial-report-2023/>.