

Annual Report 2025

Introduction	2
Activities	3
Data collection	3
Data validation	4
Data sharing	5
GBIF	5
NDFF	5
Scientific publications	6
Mobile apps	6
Image recognition	6
Stranding.nl	7
Open source software	7
Events	7
Global Mammal Big Day	7
City Nature Challenge	8
Dutch BioBlitzes and Projects	8
Sovon Annual Event	8
New partnerships	8
Germany, BfN and DDA (DaVon)	8
Belgium, Natuurpunt	8
Naturalis Biodiversity Center	8
Governance	9
Board	9
Global Team	10
Staff	11
Finances	11
Thank You	11

Introduction

The Observation International Foundation was established on December 1, 2015 to further the international development of Observation.org, the digital platform for recording species observations. At its founding, the platform had three national versions: Waarneming.nl, Waarnemingen.be and Observations.be. The platform itself was first published online in September 2001, making it one of the oldest citizen science platforms in the world.

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.

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

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History

2025-07-30 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 45,702,006 observations worldwide, a growth of 16% compared to 2024 (39,510,368 observations).

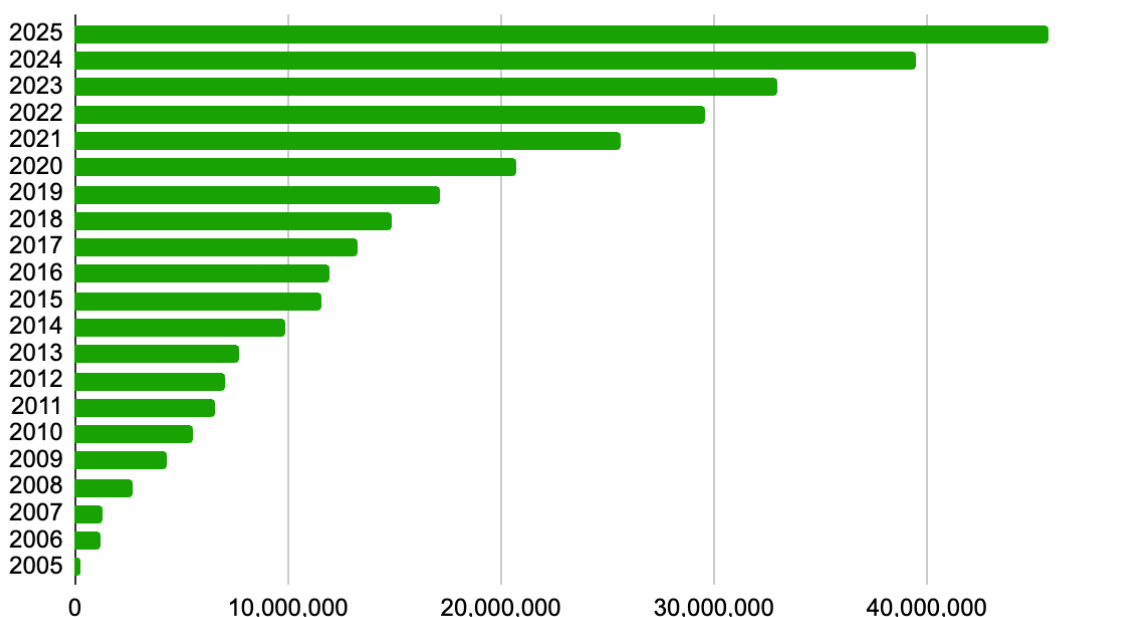
The top 10 countries with the most observations collected in 2025 are:

Country	2025	2024	Total
Netherlands	18,778,438	16,638,083	164,481,200
Belgium	12,071,201	10,363,448	96,034,798
Germany	5,248,440	3,477,114	18,559,035
France	2,427,747	1,979,365	13,736,378
Spain	1,435,266	3,053,208	11,711,194
South Africa	794,334	107,625	1,334,286
United Kingdom	698,691	505,339	2,536,942
Austria	548,008	424,964	2,226,753
Italy	277,158	215,425	1,180,655
Sweden	246,234	136,488	967,282

Large data imports for Spain (2024) and South Africa (2025) impact the results for those years.

The total number of observations per year is still increasing, as the graph below shows:

Observations per year since 2005



Data validation

Over 1,000 validators were active on the platform in 2025. The countries with the most active validators were:

country	2025	2024
Netherlands	503	520
Belgium	365	387
Germany	328	326
Spain	236	453
France	183	292
Portugal	158	307
Austria	152	168
Italy	130	150
United Kingdom	124	144
Switzerland	113	134

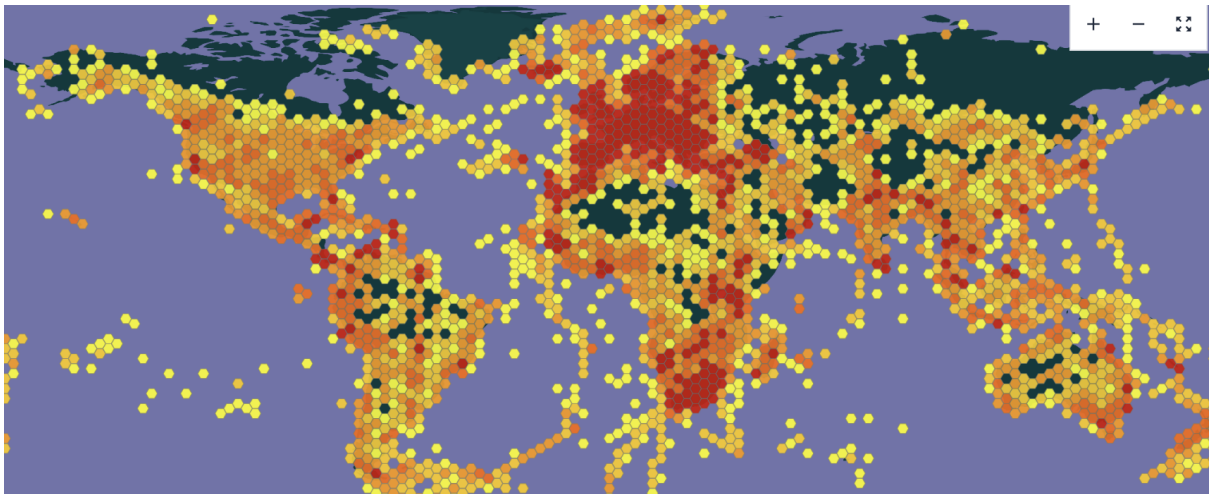
Validators can be active in more than one country. A validator counts for a country with at least one validation action in that country.

Data sharing

GBIF

Observation International has been an Associate Participant of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility ([GBIF](#)) since 2021.

In 2025, our dataset on GBIF grew to over 120 million occurrences. This included circa 40 million photos and over 125.000 sound files suitable for identification and research purposes. Observation.org consistently ranks among the top 3 largest datasets on GBIF. The Dutch contribution from Observation.org is the largest Dutch dataset on GBIF, with over 100 million occurrence records.



In 2025, Observation.org started a project, funded by NLBIF, to expand the GBIF export with unvalidated observations and to provide finer location precision for Dutch records (grant EUR 23,293, reference nlbif2025.015, started September 2025).

Since some of our partners publish their data on GBIF through other publishers, the actual numbers of observations collected through Observation.org on GBIF are higher.

For more information about our connection to GBIF and our data on GBIF, visit <https://observation.org/pages/gbif/>.

NDFF

Observation.org shares Dutch observations with the Dutch National Database Flora and Fauna ([NDFF](#)). In 2025, we shared over 18 million new observations with the NDFF. Observation.org is the largest data provider to the NDFF.

In January 2025, a new structural cooperation agreement was signed with BIJ12, the organisation that manages the NDFF on behalf of the Dutch provinces, putting the data-sharing relationship on a formal long-term footing.

Scientific publications

In 2025, at least 820 scientific publications used Observation.org data through GBIF. The total number of scientific publications using Observation.org data from GBIF is 3,745 at the time of writing. The table below shows the growth over the past years.

Year	Publications
2025	820
2024	856
2023	729
2022	560
2021	395
2020	135

We do not actively track scientific publications that use our data through channels other than GBIF and therefore do not have figures on those.

Mobile apps

In 2025, our mobile apps continued to play a central role in how users engage with nature and record biodiversity observations.

[ObsIdentify](#) continued its success story, now installed on more than 1.5 million phones worldwide. Its combination of user-friendly design and powerful image recognition has helped lower the threshold for nature recording, especially among new users.

In January 2025, the new app [Observation](#) was launched publicly, following its soft launch in 2024. Designed as the universal mobile companion for the platform, Observation integrates core functionality with modern design and improved usability, and forms the foundation for continued platform development.

The apps [iObs](#) and [ObsMapp](#) remained in maintenance mode but kept a large and loyal user base, and remain important tools for fieldwork.

Image recognition

Our image recognition services are the result of a long-standing and productive partnership with [Naturalis Biodiversity Center](#). Observation.org users play a key role by contributing and annotating millions of photos each year. These images, especially when linked to verified observations, form a high-quality reference dataset for training and improving machine learning models. Over 90% of the data for the AI recognition model is provided by Observation.org.

Naturalis is responsible for the development, training, and evaluation of these models. Their expertise in AI and biodiversity ensures that each new version becomes more accurate and robust. This partnership enables us to offer advanced, user-friendly image recognition in ObsIdentify and elsewhere on the Observation platform, supporting both casual users and species experts in data collection and validation. It is a powerful example of how collaborative infrastructure can scale and enhance biodiversity monitoring across Europe and beyond.

Stranding.nl

In 2025, [Stranding.nl](https://stranding.nl) remained the central platform for reporting and tracking stranded marine animals along the Dutch coast. Managed in close collaboration with partner organisations, the platform supports data collection, data retrieval, visualisation and public awareness around marine strandings, from harbour porpoises and seals to large whales.

Observation International continues to provide the technical infrastructure and support for Stranding.nl, ensuring reliable data handling and seamless integration with broader biodiversity systems. Incoming reports are validated by species experts and responders, allowing high-quality data to be used for research, policy, and conservation efforts.

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>
 - 3 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>
 - 430 stars
- django-icons
 - <https://github.com/zostera/django-icons>
 - 77 stars
- django-modeltrans
 - <https://github.com/zostera/django-modeltrans>
 - 79 stars
- django-tables2
 - <https://github.com/jieter/django-tables2>
 - ~2,000 stars

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

Events

Observation International participated in several events, including:

Global Mammal Big Day

Observation.org served as the official data platform for the inaugural Global Mammal Big Day on October 5, 2025, co-organised with Global Wildlife Fair and Agami Image Bank.

City Nature Challenge

Observation.org was the platform partner for several cities for their participation in the 10th City Nature Challenge

Dutch BioBlitzes and Projects

Observation.org was a partner or technology provider for several major Dutch BioBlitzes including Heel Zeist Telt Mee (Zeist), Expeditie Stadsnatuur (Leiden) and the Texel Big Day (Texel). Observation.org provided new reusable software for the annual Texel Big Day in May 2025, in cooperation with Stichting Vogeleiland Texel.

Sovon Annual Event

Observation International was present at the Sovon Landelijke Dag 2025, the annual gathering for bird researchers and enthusiasts in the Netherlands. The event remains an important opportunity to connect with the Dutch birding community, share developments on the Observation platform, and exchange ideas with fieldworkers, researchers, and partner organisations. We were able to explain and discuss our ideas and vision, answer questions, and receive valuable feedback. We also highlighted how structured monitoring and casual observations can complement each other, and how tools like the apps Observation and ObsIdentify support both beginning and experienced birdwatchers. The event continues to be a valuable moment for dialogue and community building.

New partnerships

Germany, BfN and DDA (DaVon)

In 2025, Observation International entered into its most significant new institutional partnership to date, with BfN (Bundesamt für Naturschutz) and DDA (Dachverband Deutscher Avifaunisten). The contract was signed in June 2025, and the project, known as DaVon, kicked off in November 2025 in Bonn, with representatives of approximately ten German federal states present. This marks Observation.org's first large-scale engagement with Germany's national biodiversity infrastructure.

Belgium, Natuurpunt

A structural development agreement with Natuurpunt was formalised in 2025, focusing on developer capacity for structural monitoring software within the Observation.org platform.

Naturalis Biodiversity Center

In 2025, Observation International and Naturalis concluded a new cooperation agreement, effective from 1 January 2025 and running through 1 January 2030, covering the hosting and technical management of the Observation.org platform and AI-based species identification via the Nature Identification API. The agreement renews and replaces the earlier arrangements between the two organisations and underpins ObsIdentify's image recognition.

Governance

Board

During 2025, 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 2026.

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 2025, 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 2025, Observation.org had a staff size of 16 people / approximately 11 FTE.

Three people were directly employed by Observation International.

11 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 2024 which is published on our website at <https://observation-international.org/en/reports/financial-report-2025/>.

Thank You

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to Observation International's mission in 2025.

To the hundreds of thousands of observers and the thousands of validators: your dedication, expertise, and curiosity are the foundation of everything we do. Whether through a single observation, daily fieldwork, or the careful review of thousands of images, your contributions make biodiversity visible and accessible.

We are grateful to our partners, from local nature organisations to natural history museums, and from governments to international networks, for your trust, collaboration, and shared ambition. Together we make data count for science, conservation, and policy.

Special thanks go to organisations and individuals who helped fund our platform through partnerships, projects, and in-kind contributions.

We also warmly thank everyone who made a donation to support our mission. Your generosity is both encouraging and impactful.

Last but not least, we would like to specifically thank the Dutch National Database Flora and Fauna (NDFF), Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Natuurpunt, and Natagora as our long-standing partners. Their continued collaboration remains essential to the strength and impact of the Observation platform.