Royal Museum for Central Africa

Data transcription: birds registration sheets

Thank you for your cooperation in our mission of unlocking the information of the collections held at the Royal Museum for Central Africa!

If you would like to get better acquainted with the animals of the African continent and help science with a more thorough contribution, then the transcription of data is something for you!

The aim of this tutorial is to help you to deliver correct information in a standardized form, so that scientists can directly use it to enrich their collection metadata.

Each project is accompanied by a short text about the collection you will be working with. Click on "Get started" to proceed. As soon as you once again click on "Get started", the page will refresh to show you an image – a specimen with labels or a page from a register – and a form (or table) consisting of several fields next to and under it.

Our current project is about transcribing the bird registration sheets. Our bird collection, almost entirely obtained in Africa, contains over 150,000 bird specimens, including flat-skins, specimens preserved in alcohol, mounted specimen and skeletons, but also eggs, bird nests etc.

Approximately 250 species and sub-species of birds are represented by type specimens.

In the years 1910-1920, when the Belgian zoologist Henri Schouteden started to work at the scientific services in the Royal Museum for Central Africa, every specimen received was entered in the registration book (see our projects on registries transcription). But from 1973, Dirk Thys van den Audenaerde started registering new acquisitions on cardboard sheets as shown below.

Those sheets are more easily to handle and bird specimens of same species can be grouped on one or more pages. Simultaneously a new system of numbering was introduced (see the explanation of the field "Registration Number").

MUSEUM TERVUREN			Acanthis cannabina cannabina			(LINNAEUS)	1

Sect : Vertebrata.

Aves - Fringillidae

Reg. Numr.	Inform. Praep.	L o c .	Datum.	Collector.	Determ. dat.	O b s e r v a t .
73-41-A-418	alc W=16gr.	Abderamam, algérie	23.02 1973	W.Verheyen en Petiniot 4412	M.Louette —1980	

These registration sheets have been digitalized because they contain valuable information about our bird collection (localities, collectors, special observations, …), which can be added to our digital databases and thus improve collection management and serve scientific research.

Some general conventions:

For this specific project the template is strait forward – every field in the table is a column on the sheet. All sheets have the same layout with 7 columns: Reg. Numr. (Registration Number), Inform. Praep. (Information on Preparation, sometimes written "Conservation"), Loc. (Location), Datum (Date, sometimes written "Rec. Dat."), Collector, Determ. Dat. (Determination Date) and Observat.(Observation). Every row represents one specimen. The content can be written in French or Dutch, exceptionally also in English. In the template we also added the columns for Scientific Name, Author, Sex and Drawing, to make it easier to add respective information. You will find an explanation of each field below.

If none of the requested information is present in a cell then you do not need to enter anything.

You will soon need to jump around from field to field. Given the form's length and most computers' screen size, you will eventually get the page out of sight. To avoid going up and down all the time, you may want to first click on one of the symbols on the image, right under:

 By clicking on the first symbol, a second window will open with only the specimen. By adapting both windows' sizes, you can arrange them so that the specimen is always in place on one and you may move around the form freely on the other.

 By clicking on the second symbol, you fix the image at its place and may then move around freely on the form.

Whenever the text is written in a language you do not understand at all, skip the task. If, however, you can tell which information goes where, proceed with the transcription.

Also pertaining to language, we advise you not to change between languages once you have started a task, because otherwise all the information you have already entered will be lost.

Descriptive text should be written as it is.

Whenever you are not sure of the information you are transcribing, may it be because the handwriting is hard to read, the ink has almost disappeared, the information is covered by something, etc., take your best shot and write your interpretation between square brackets "[]" (e.g. write "500 m from the [coast]" or "between [Kinshasa] and [Banana]" when certain words or parts thereof are not clearly written). If despite any efforts, you really have no idea whatsoever of what's written, enter simply "[]".

Use double tilde (~~) for the text which is strikethrough (in the example below it should be written: oiseau noir Myrmecocichla nigra ~~Phalacrocorax africanus~~).
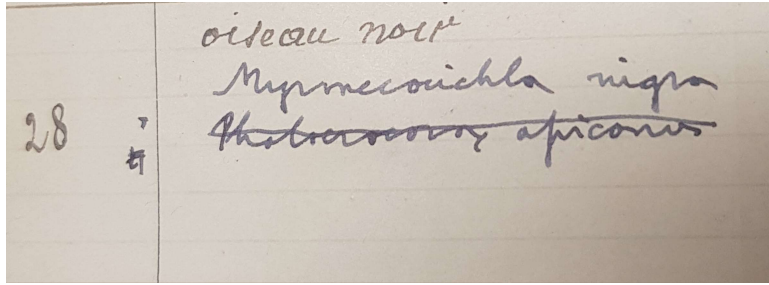
There is room for 12 records, one specimen in a row, on each sheet. Also in the template you see 12 rows. Try to fill in all the rows where something is written. If you only see numbers on the sheet, write numbers only.

A description of each field's purpose and examples are hereunder.

1. **Document details**

Scientific Name: Enter the scientific name as it is mentioned on the right top of the image and repeat it for all rows with numbers. A scientific species name, in Latin, consists of two parts: a genus (first letter written in upper case) and a specific epithet (first letter written in lower case) identifying the species within the genus (in our case *Accipiter francesii*) and sometimes yet another epithet for the subspecies or the variety *(brutus)*. The author's name follows quite often (sometimes in brackets) (e.g. (*Pollen)*) and should be added to the column "**Author**".

Reg. Numr. (Registration Number): a number given to the specimen by the collection manager. All numbers consist of several elements: year ("73", from 1973), collection number within this year ("60"), letter "A" referring to Aves (ornithological collection) and individual specimen number within this collection ("27"). They are separated by dash ("-"). If only last number is written like on the fourth line in the example below, write complete number (so instead of writing " -198" you should write "76-13-A-198").

73-60-A-27	
74-44-A-1045	
76-13-A-167	
" -198	
78-05-A-326	

Inform. Praep. (Information on preparation , sometimes written "Conservation"): description of how specimens is preserved or what parts of specimens are delivered. It can be a whole specimen in alcohol, a study skin (e.g. "balg", "alc"), a skeleton or only plumes. In this column you can also add information on:

- stage (juvenile/adult) ,

- other information, e.g. weight ("w-11 g").

An information on sex (symbols ♀ for female and ♂ for male) should be entered it in the separate column "**Sex**" preferably using a letter ("F" or "M").

80-42-A-33	balg	
82-06-A-20	alc	♀
	w-11g	
" -21	alc	♂
	-11g	

Loc. (Location): a location where specimen was collected. Often you will find in this column the abbreviation 'id' (Latin for 'idem') or double apostrophe '' meaning 'the same'. If it is clear what location is meant, please copy it instead of using 'id'! If it is not clear – fill in 'id'. In the example below it should be written in all three rows "Mutaka, Zaïre".

Datum (Date, sometimes written "Rec. Dat"): date when specimen was collected/received or arrived to the museum. Often you will find in this column the abbreviation 'id' (Latin for 'idem') or double apostrophe '' meaning 'the same'. If it is clear what date is meant, please copy it instead of using 'id'! If it is not clear – fill in 'id'.

Collector: is a name of a collector who collected the specimen in the field. Often you will find in this column the abbreviation 'id' (Latin for 'idem') or double apostrophe '' meaning 'the same'. If it is clear what expeditor is meant, please copy it instead of using 'id'! If it is not clear – fill in 'id'. Sometimes you will also see a number next to the name, probably representing a field number. Please write it next to the name, separated by comma. In the example below it should be written in both rows 'F.L.Hendrickx, 798; F.L.Hendrickx, 843"

Determ.dat. (Determination (or identification) date): date when specimen was identified or re-identified by whom. In the example below it should be written "M.Louette, 1978", meaning that M.Louette has determined this specimen in 1978.

Observat. (Observations): different collection managers use these fields to add different kind of information about the storage, state of the specimen or identification notes. The drawings in this column are usually about the eyes (color) and eggs. Please ignore any symbols and "dB", just add in the next column "**Drawing"** text " YES" or "NO".

2. **Notes:**

Your notes: This is your space! Enter here any pertinent information you think might be helpful when validating this task.

Save task:

All the information available on the page must find its way to one of the fields in the form. Once you have done that, you have finished this task!

If you have entered all the information, you may then click on **Save** at the bottom of the page. Here, you may also want to save an unfinished task to get back to it later, skip the task, or post a question on the Forum about this specimen.

In the next window, you can then choose your next action:

Thank you! Your transcription was saved at

- Transcribe another task
- Return to the saved task
- Go to project front page
- View all my contributions (including all saved tasks)

And that was it!

In case of doubts or questions, it may be useful to visit our Forum and either search for existing answers or even create a topic yourself.

If the available help buttons and the forum entries do not suffice, we can always be reached by e-mail (see the contacts listed under Contact on the main page). We will try to answer as soon and clearly as possible.

Finally, we remind you that every contribution, big or small, regular or sporadic, is greatly appreciated!

Do your best while keeping in mind the guidelines above, but never take a DoeDat-project as a chore or worry too much! Everyone makes mistakes and all data will be validated.

Thank you for joining us in our mission!