Royal Museum for Central Africa

Data transcription: zoological specimens

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 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. This is our first project on crowdsourcing of label information and the tutorial is rather short. It will be updated regularly as transcribing progresses and we receive your questions and/or feedback.

Each project is accompanied by a short text about the specimens 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 virtual zoological specimen – and a form consisting of several fields next to and under it.

On the image above you will notice a dry specimen (a dragonfly in our example), and one or more labels with all sorts of information, including original label, i.e. the very first label containing information about the specimen, usually written by the collector, and later labels added when specimen was re-identified. You find some examples hereunder. As you can see, there is a variety of styles, shapes, handwritings and even colors and symbols.

Your task is to transcribe all information present on these labels. In practice, this means you must find the correct field in the form most suitable for each piece of information on the label and enter it there. A description of each field's purpose and label examples are hereunder. Furthermore, a shorter explanation is always available on the form itself if you click on the help button - the question mark next to each field.

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 specimen 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.

Fields on the form are grouped under different categories:

1. **Identification** deals with how the animal is named and referred to.

2. **Collection data** concern mainly the collection event: who collected the specimen, when, additional remarks, and how was it catalogued on the field.

3. **Spatial data** are also linked to the collection event but address specifically the question "where?".

4. **Other data** in our case concern identification information, by whom and when identification is made and also information about the sex.

5. **Notes** is your space! No information from the specimen should be written here. Instead, you are free to add any doubt or remark linked specifically to this particular specimen, which might help us validating the data later on.

Some fields are mandatory and you always need to fill something in before being able to save the task (marked with * on the form).

Some general conventions

Whenever the label 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.

<mark>Pay attention: In no circumstance should you translate the information on the specimen label: enter it exactly as written on the label except otherwise noted below for *Type status*!</mark>

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 can 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 "[]". To enter square brackets is only possible for free-text fields; for all others, write your interpretation under Miscellaneous and leave the corresponding field empty.

1. **Identification**

*Scientific Name as databased ***

This field is mandatory (If it is not already filled in automatically!). Enter the scientific name as it is mentioned in the filename of the image (position: just above this field). 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 (e.g. Homo sapiens, or in our case Gynacantha flavipes). The author's name follows quite often (e.g. Gynacantha flavipes Fraser) and sometimes yet another epithet for the subspecies or the variety; all this information belongs to the scientific name as well.

*Scientific name as given**

This field is mandatory (If it is not already filled in automatically!). Enter the scientific name as it is mentioned by the collector on the label. Ignore any later determinations. A scientific species name, in Latin, consists mainly of two parts: a genus (first letter written in upper case) and a specific epithet (first letter written in lower case). The author's name follows quite often and sometimes yet another epithet for the subspecies or the variety or abbreviations (e.g. 'sp.', 'sp.nov.', 'spec.'); all this information belongs to the scientific name as well.
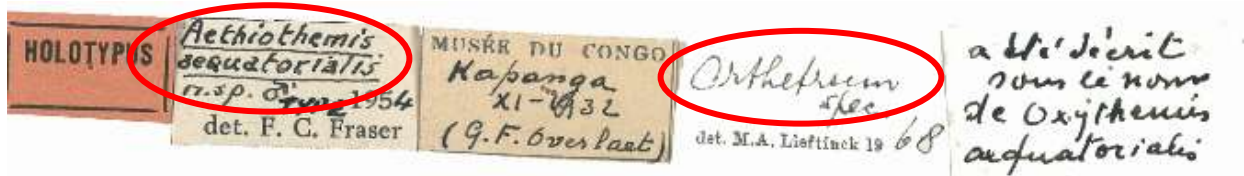
The name on the specimen may sometimes be different from that found under "Taxon" at the top of the page, but always enter here the name you find on the label. If no scientific name is given on the original label, enter "unknown" (without the quotation marks).
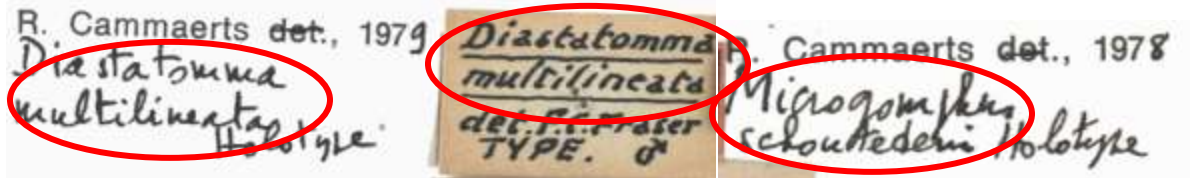
Write: *Diastatomma multilineata*   *Microgomphus schoutedeni*

Write: *Aethiothemis aequatorialis n.sp.*   *Orthetrum spec.*

Taxon author

The author's name may follow the Scientific name *(Genus species (subspecies))* with first letter written in upper case. The name can be abbreviated to one or more letters and be written in between the brackets. Enter it here as it is, e.g. "Fras.", "(Martin)" (without the quotation marks).
If no author name is written leave the field empty.

Pay attention: Never choose the name after det. (from determinavit, Latin for "(s)he has determined")! This refers to the Identifier (see explanation under point 4. Other data) !
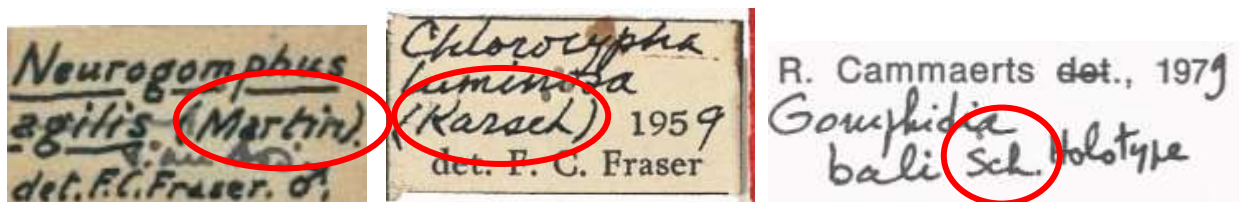
Write: (Martin)   (Karsch)   Sch.

Year of taxon name publication

Usually written on the label with Scientific name next to taxon author name.
If nothing is written leave the field empty.

Pay attention: In the example above, '1959' and '1979' are not Year of taxon name publication but Year of Identification (see explanation under point 4. Other data) !
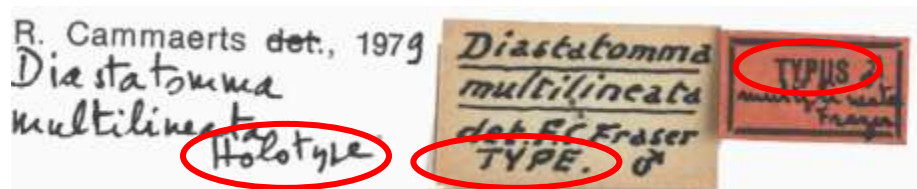
Type status

A type is a particular specimen of an organism to which the scientific name of that organism is formally attached. Usually written in block letters or on a red label. Choose correct type from drop-down list of

existing types (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Type_(biology)). If no Type status is mentioned on any label leave this field empty.
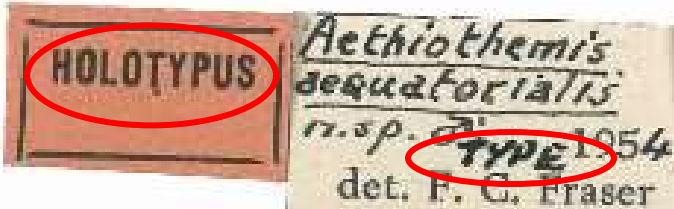
Write: Holotype

Write: Holotype

Habitat

A plant, animal, or other life form's habitat is the type of natural community in which it lives. Habitat is always a relatively general description (e.g. forest, near the river, in the quarry) and may sometimes mention other species present in the area. On the label, habitat is sometimes mentioned after locality.

2. **Collection data**

Collection date*
Enter here the date when the specimen was collected. All dates must be entered in a standardized form: day (DD), month (MM), and year (YYYY). If there is a precise date on the label, complete only the from-line (e.g. read "15/9bre 1908", write "15/11/1908"). If the date corresponds to a time interval, fill in the earliest possible date in the first line and the latest possible date in the second line (e.g. read "May-June 1937", write from "05/1937" to "06/1937").
This field is mandatory: If the year is missing although day and/or month are mentioned, enter "3000" for the year. Similarly, if the collection date is missing altogether, just enter "3000" for the year.

Collector (standardized)
The collector is the person who collected the specimen. His/Her name generally appears conspicuously on the label, often after the abbreviation of the museum or museum's collection (e.g. "Musée du Congo" or "Coll. Mus. Congo") and together with locality and collection date. This field is a drop-down

menu with selected collector's names, just choose the right collector from it. If you do not find the name on the list choose "Alia" (Latin for "other") and use the field below "Collector as given" to enter the name. If no collector is indicated on the label leave this field empty.

<mark>Pay attention: Never choose the name after "det. " (from determinavit, Latin for "(s)he has determined")!</mark>
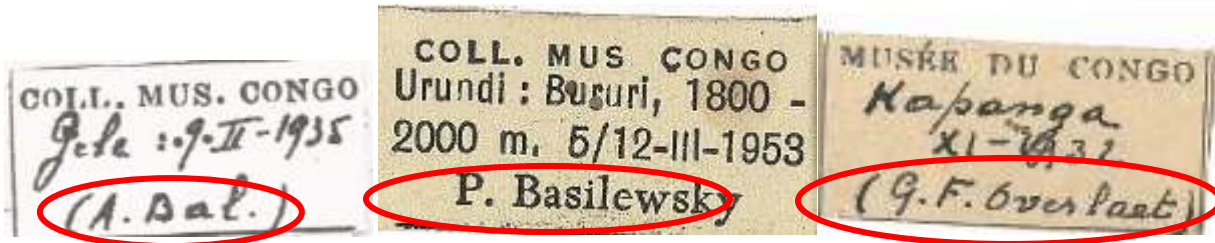
Write: Bal A.   Basilevsky P.   Overlaet G.F.

Collector as given*
Enter here the collector name(s) exactly spelled and in the same order as they appear on the label (e.g. read "G.F. Overlaet", write "G.F. Overlaet").
This field is mandatory: If no collector is indicated on the label, enter "S.C." (notice the capitals and full stops; "sine collectore" is Latin for "without collector").

<mark>Pay attention: Never choose the name after "det." (from determinavit, Latin for "(s)he has determined")!</mark>
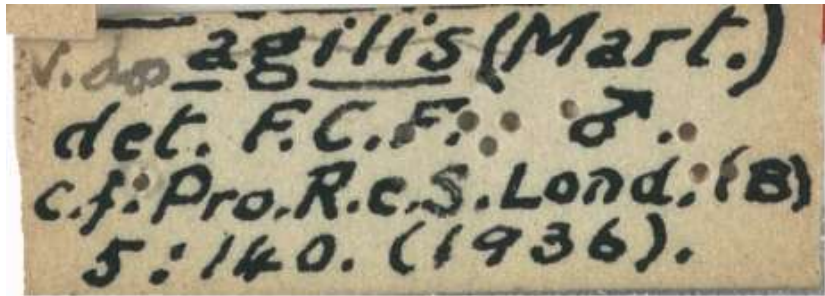
Miscellaneous

Enter here any other information mentioned on the label for which no specific field exists elsewhere.
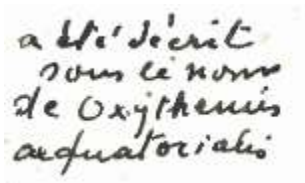
Write: a été décrit sous le nom de Oxythemis aequatorialis

          Write: R.Det. W 5272

Write: c.f. Pro.R.c.S.Lond. (B) 5:140 (1936)

For you to know: it as a reference to the publication of taxon name in Proceedings of the Royal Society of London, series B (Biology), volume 5, page 140, published in 1936. Year can be used to fill in the field "Identified Date".

3. **Spatial data**

*Locality as given **

Locality often appears after the abbreviation of the museum or museum's collection (e.g. "Musée du Congo" or "Coll. Mus. Congo") and together with a collector's name and collection date. Enter here all descriptive data concerning the place where the specimen was collected. Transcribe everything verbatim, i.e. just like it is indicated on the label (i.e. do not translate or substitute historical by present names).

Pay attention: Proper names referring to localities should be entered under Locality as given instead (e.g. read "near Congo river close to Kinshasa", write "Near Congo river." under Habitat and "Close to Kinshasa." under Locality as given).

This field is mandatory: If there is no locality whatsoever on the label, enter "S.L." instead (notice the capitals and full stops; "sine loco" is Latin for "without place").
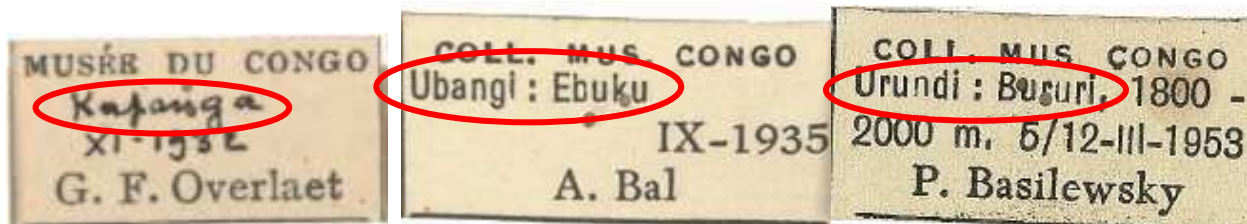
Write: Kapanga   Ubangi, Ebuku   Urundi, Bururi

Put altitude (1800-2000 m) in corresponding field!

Altitude

Altitude is the vertical distance to the average sea level. If a single value is given on the label, enter it on the first cell; if a range is given, enter the lowest value on the first cell, the highest value on the second. Always choose the unity (meters or feet) on the third cell. If the altitude is given as "sea level", enter "0" on the first cell and choose "meters" on the third. If the altitude as given on the label cannot be correctly rendered here, leave these fields empty and write it under Miscellaneous instead (you may nonetheless ignore indications such as approximately and ca.).

3. Spatial data

Locality as given	Urundi, Bururi
Altitude	1800 – 2000 Metres
Coordinates as given	

If the geographic coordinates do not appear on the label, find them using the mapping tool below.

Mapping tool

Mapping tool 📍

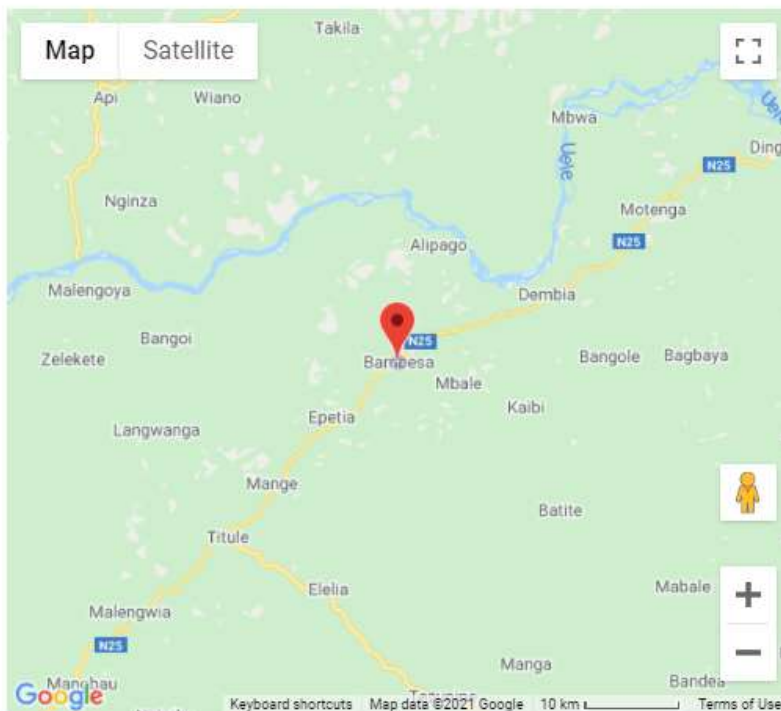|	
Longitude	
Latitude	
Coordinate uncertainty (metres)	
Country	Burundi

Coordinates as given
Enter here the geographical coordinates as given on the label (e.g. "54º32'10''N, 012º34'56''E"); these are a numerical code for identifying a point on the Earth's surface.

Mapping tool

By clicking on the mapping tool, the system will automatically try to match the data you entered under Locality as given with known and named places on Google Maps. Follow the instructions on the appearing window as to how to use the mapping tool correctly. You may also drag the marking in order to more accurately.

COLL. MUS. CONGO
Uele Bambesa
        II-1938
    J. Vrijdagh
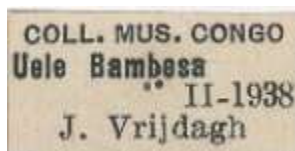
Write in *Locality as given* "Uele Bambesa" and use the mapping tool:

Mapping tool

LOCALITY SEARCH

Uele Bambesa, Democratic Re ⌕

COORDINATE UNCERTAINTY (METRES)

Adjust uncertainty

1000 ⌄

Please choose an uncertainty value from the list matching the radius of the circle (in metres) which best represents the area of the given location. This area can be seen as the circle around the point on the map.

LOCATION DATA

Latitude:	3.4431
Longitude:	25.6924
Location:	Unnamed Road, Bambesa, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Close & cancel   Copy values to main form ✔

You can also drag and drop the marker icon to set the location.

==Pay attention: Be critical when using the mapping tool, because it does not always work (e.g. in case of ambiguous localities, wrong spellings); it does nonetheless render quite useful data when it works properly.== Especially when old names are written on the label the use of Mapping tool is not advisable. Also keep in mind that when locality notes mention a province (Katanga), river (Uele river), national park (Upemba) or another kind of region, the Mapping tool will propose you just a point in the middle and this is not correct. So if you can't find the exact place, stick to Locality as given.

Latitude

Line on the Earth's surface in reference to the Equator. This field is automatically filled in once you have used the mapping tool.

Longitude

Line on the Earth's surface in reference to the arbitrarily defined international reference meridian. This field is automatically filled in once you have used the mapping tool.

Coordinate uncertainty (meters)

Expressed as a radius around the location, this measure reflects the area within which one may reasonably assume the specimen was collected. Choose the radius which best covers the area one may reasonably assume given the locality description (e.g. Kinshasa and village Bambesa have very different geographical extents; Leopoldville might be the city; 8 km from Bujumbura clearly indicates the distance to the nearest known reference…). Leave empty if the reasonable radius exceeds 10 km.

*Country ***

Choose from the list the country in which this specimen was collected. In case of ambiguity or doubt, use the field Miscellaneous to enter the data as given on the label and leave this field empty despite the error message. Most specimens of this Odonata collection should have been collected in Democratic Republic of Congo, but surrounding countries are also possible.

This field is mandatory: In the rare cases the country is ambiguous, unclear, not mentioned on the label nor deductible from the locality as given, choose "(ZZ)".

4. Other data

Most of the specimens have several labels attached. Besides the original label written by a collector, there are also labels with identification information which can be written or by a collector himself or by a curator during later identification/re-identification process. This why there are several fields (1, 2, 3…) to cover all identifications history.

Identified By (1, 2, 3..)

A name(s) of people, groups, or organizations who assigned the Taxon to the specimen. Often a name after "det." (from determinavit, Latin for "(s)he has determined").

Identified Date (1, 2, 3...)

The date on which the specimen was identified as representing the Taxon.

Identification (1, 2, 3…)

The scientific name (Taxon) assigned to the specimen.

Identified sex (1, 2, 3…)

Sex of the organism is mostly shown on the label using two symbols: ♀ for female and ♂ for male . Choose a correct symbol from drop-down list. If sex is not mentioned on the label, leave the field empty.
.

On the example below there is only one identification:

Write:

Identified By (1): F.C. Fraser

Identified Date (1): 1955

Identification (1): *Aciagrion heterosticta Fraser*

Identified sex (1): male

On the second example there are multiple identifications:

Identified By (1): F.C. Fraser
Identified Date (1): 1954
Identification (1): *Aethiothemis aequatorialis n.sp.*
Identified sex (1): male

Identified By (2): M.A. Lieftinck
Identified Date (2): 1968
Identification (2): *Orthetrum spec.*
Identified sex (2):

The last label with handwritten identification remarques should be entered in the field Miscellaneous!

Pay attention: fill in the identifications chronologically!

5. **Notes**

Your notes

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

Incomplete transcription?

Check this box if you were not able to transcribe all information present on the original label into the online form (identification labels and pieces of information posterior to the collection event are not concerned). This should be exceptional but it may apply to labels written in foreign scripts, when handwriting is very hard to decipher, or when information is given in a format which cannot be rendered by simple typing (e.g. drawings, schemes).

If this could not be achieved, please check this box.

Save task

All the information available on the specimen label 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 (up to 2 hours), skip the task, or post a question on the Forum about this specimen.

Save   Save unfinished task   Skip   Create forum topic
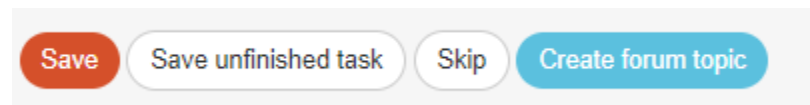
In the next window, you can then choose your next action:

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 and the instructions of the help buttons , 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!