

# THE USE OF VOLUNTEER DATA



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Úna FitzPatrick  
National Biodiversity Data Centre

Ireland's  
biodiversity  
contribute  
**€2.6 billion to the  
Irish economy** each year.

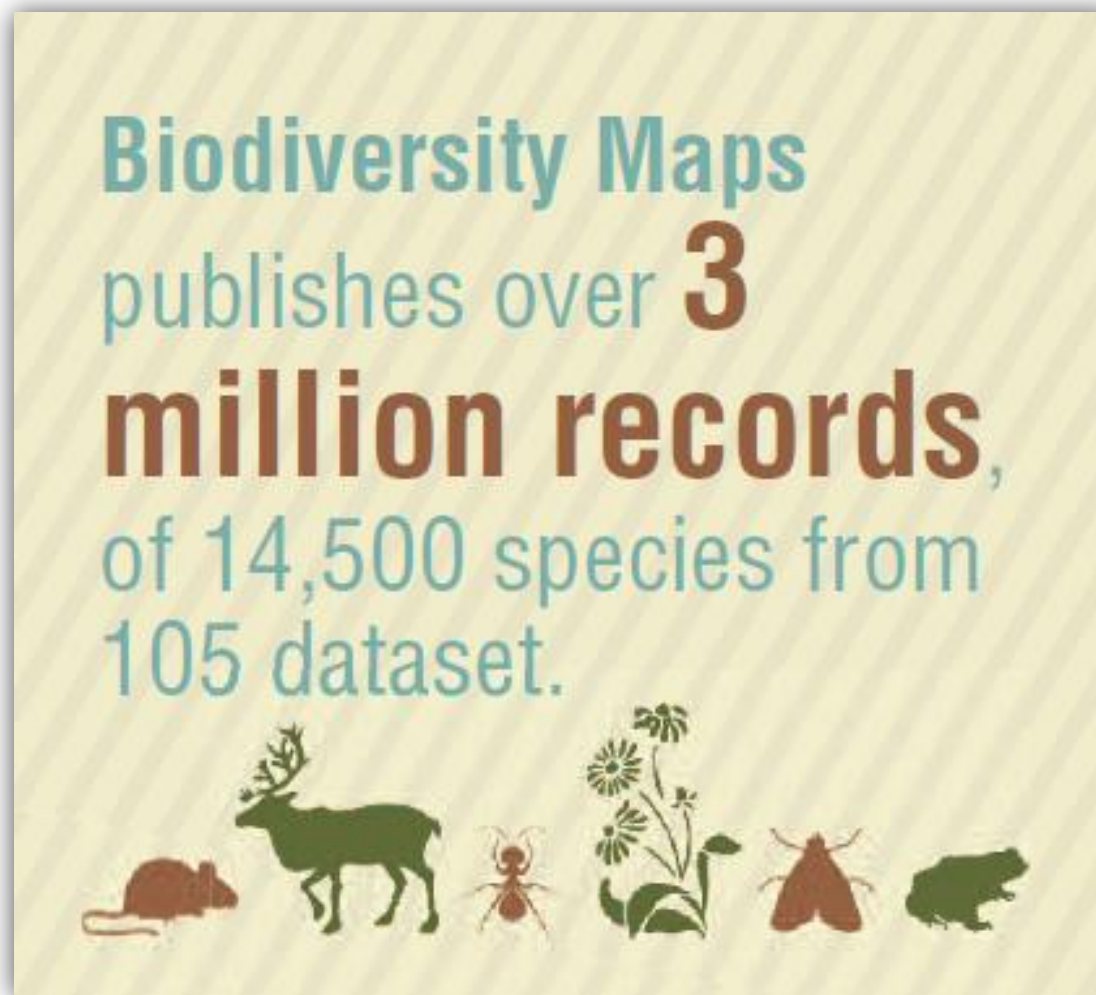


# National Biodiversity Data Centre

*Documenting Ireland's Wildlife*

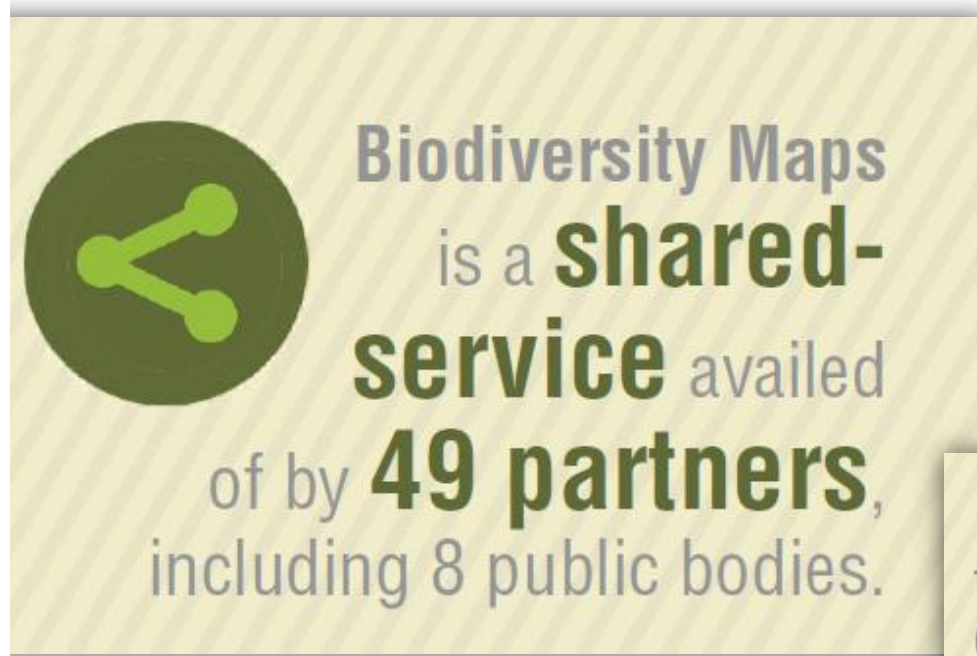
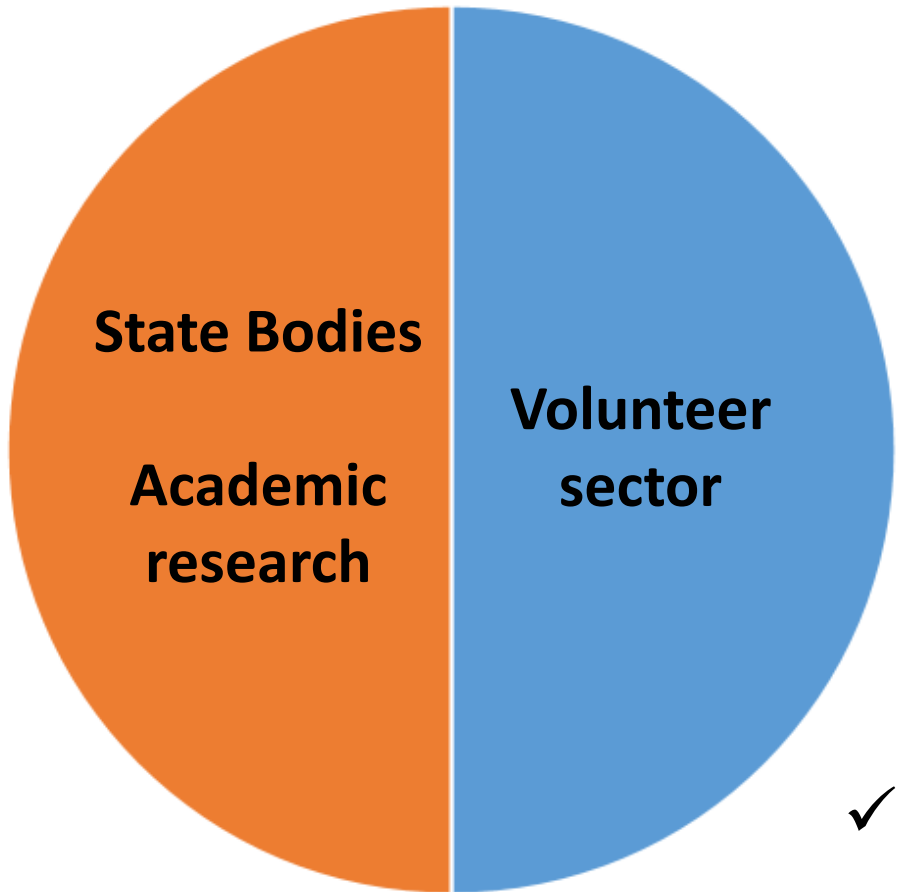


**Collate information to manage  
that resource**

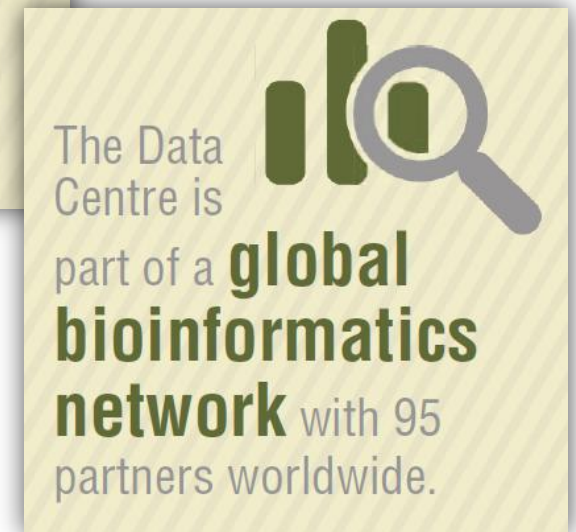


<http://maps.biodiversityireland.ie>

Through Biodiversity Maps, the Data Centre provides a national infrastructure for biodiversity data, with information being pooled from many sources

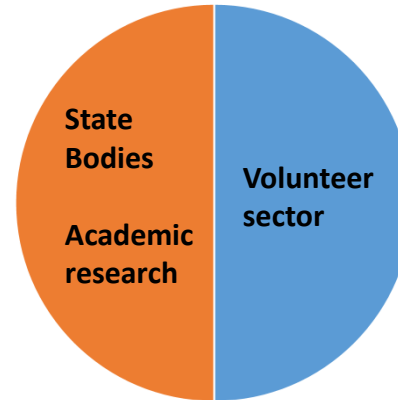


✓ Accessibility and re-use of data





Biodiversity Maps  
publishes over **3**  
**million records**,  
of 14,500 species from  
105 dataset.



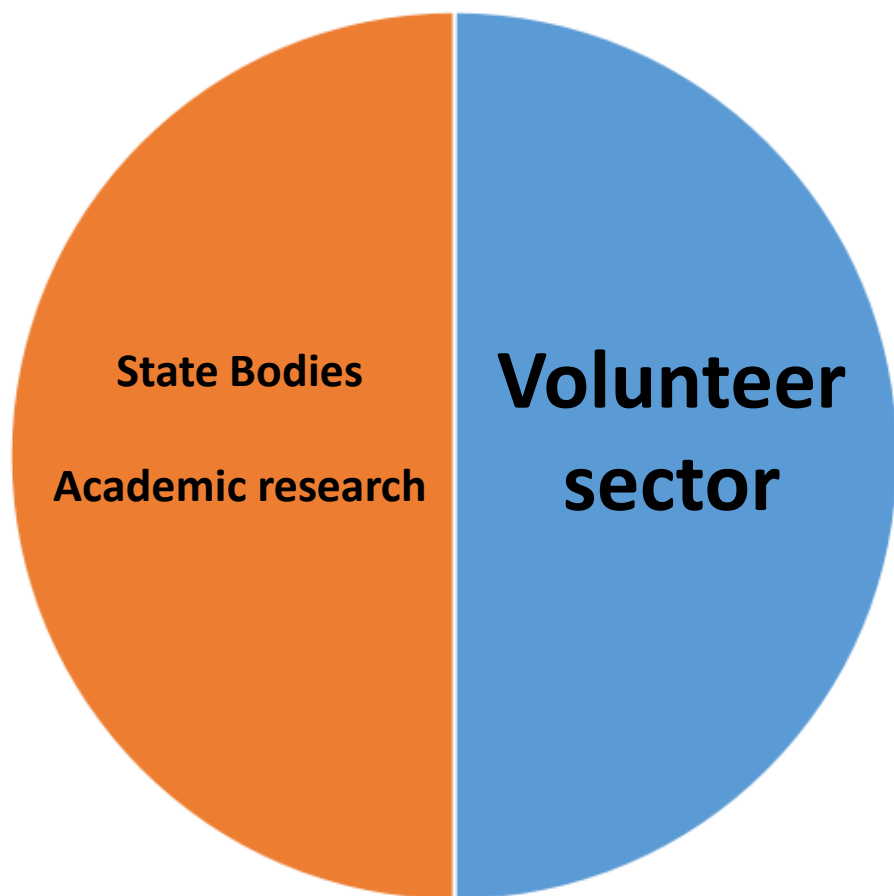
Biodiversity Maps supports  
implementation of national and  
international **legislation**  
and **conventions**.

Biodiversity Maps  
provides data to  
**assist regional**  
and **national**  
**planning**.



Biodiversity  
Maps tracks  
changes in 501  
**species**  
**threatened with**  
**extinction** in Ireland.





The majority of volunteer data comes from NGO's

Some comes from schemes initiated by the Data Centre to address national data needs – citizen science

Biodiversity is a resource to be managed – we have the national infrastructure for data management but are we addressing the current and future data needs to manage the resource effectively?

**Volunteer data is making a large contribution but is it as effective as it can be?**

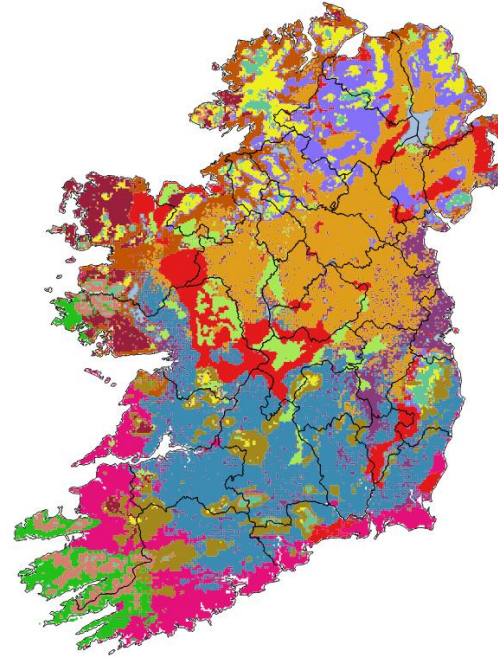
- ❖ Often collected on an ad-hoc basis – difficult to use to track change or for modelling
- ❖ Our population size is small making the recorder base a limitation



Can the limitations be addressed?

**IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE MAKE THE MOST OF THE TIME AND SKILLS THAT VOLUNTEERS ARE GENEROUS ENOUGH TO DONATE**

# Development of an All-Ireland sampling framework to improve efficiencies in the collection of future data



The sampling framework will identify a minimum network of 1km squares that are representative of the habitat and biophysical variation across Ireland. Standardised sampling methodologies will be employed at the site level.



# All-Ireland sampling framework

- ✓ Recognising the importance of volunteer data
- ✓ Ensuring a more structured approach while still keeping flexibility
- ✓ Providing better opportunities for volunteer recorders to upskill across taxonomic groups
- ✓ **Making the best use possible of the time/skills that volunteers are willing to donate**

# National Biodiversity Data Centre: citizen science initiatives



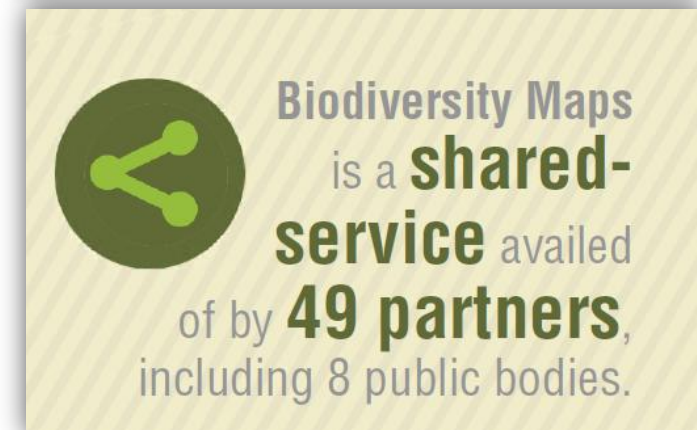
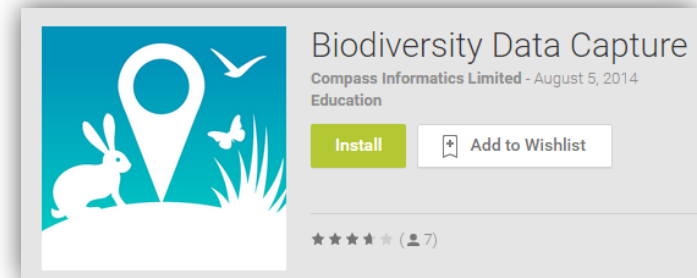
All-Ireland Bumblebee  
Monitoring Scheme



# Citizen science: lessons learned



- ✓ It is becoming an increasingly important source of information to address national data needs
- ✓ Many volunteers respond very positively to defined tasks and a prior knowledge of effort required
- ✓ Considerable care needs to be given in structuring the scheme. Citizen science cannot address all data needs
- ✓ The range of taxonomic groups for which it is suitable is growing all the time with advances in technology
- ✓ Technology has to be utilised to the maximum extent
- ✓ It is heavy on resources in terms of volunteer training & support but the rewards can be substantial
- ✓ The valuable input of volunteers should be acknowledged
- ✓ Volunteers want to know that their data is used; and what it is used for locally, nationally and internationally
- ✓ Most volunteers want to ensure that maximum use is made of their information



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