

BDBSA – Field Voucher Specimens



Photographer: D. Kraehenbuehl, Survey: 1057, Year: Unknown, Species: Emu *Dramaius novaehollandiae*

Representative plant or animal specimens (vouchers) often need to be collected during biological field work, and should be considered in the planning stages of a project. Vouchers may be required for a number of reasons, including:

- To confirm identification at time of collection and after taxonomic revisions.
- To provide genetic material.
- To confirm significant records.
- To provide South Australia's permanent collections with preserved material for taxonomic investigations, now and in the future.

As a condition to gaining a Scientific Research Permit and Wildlife Ethics approval, it is common for a plant or animal voucher specimen to be requested. Refer to webpages; [Licences & permits](#) and [Policy for wildlife research](#) specifically the document called [Collection of Voucher Specimen Policy](#). Plant Vouchers should be lodged with the State Herbarium of SA and Animal Vouchers with the South Australian Museum. Advice on the necessary specimens required should be sought with these institutions before any field work takes place. If threatened species are involved in your project, please refer to webpage [Conservation status of threatened species](#) in case any special conditions apply.

The value of a specimen depends on two major factors:

- Preparation of the material.
- Accuracy and appropriateness of associated data.

Specimen preparation

Detailed instructions on collection and field preparation of plant and animal voucher specimens, is provided by the [State Herbarium of SA](#) and [SA Museum - Biological sciences](#).

Procedures have also been described in the Biological survey manuals, as provided by the department:

- [Guide to a Native Vegetation Survey](#)
- [Guidelines for Vertebrate Surveys in South Australia](#)

Data management

Vouchers are of limited use if they are not linked to accurate and appropriate data. Once a specimen has been registered with an institution, they are assigned an official Registration Number. This may occur weeks, or even years, after the field collection was made. A **Field Voucher Number** is the best way to link the specimen to its data in the short term. Field Voucher Numbers may take various forms, however it is critical that each is unique. They must also be durable and practical for field use, and especially resistant to wet substances. The department can provide you with advice on preferred options for plant and animal voucher numbers.

The field voucher labels or tags are attached to the specimen in the field and its associated data is recorded simultaneously. The unique voucher number is written onto a datasheet next to its corresponding data. Standard voucher labels are available.

As well as ensuring that the specimen and its data are linked, it is also important to collect that data in a consistent and accurate format. For an explanation of the minimum information required, refer to the information sheet [BDBSA - Minimum Dataset Standards](#).

The recording of a Field Voucher Number (BDBSA) and a collection registration number for State Herbarium SA or SA Museum, allows a specimen to be linked across those different databases. This greatly simplifies data and taxonomy maintenance and allows for easier detection of duplicates across those systems.

Preferred way to cite this information sheet

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For more information

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