

BDBSA Species Presence and Absence Observations



Photographer: Unknown, Survey: 0625, Year: 2009, Species: Dusky Hopping-mouse *Notomys fuscus*

Historically Biological Databases of South Australia (BDBSA) has stored records of species presence. Absence data may have been implied for some projects from visits with no species records or from entering a zero in the number observed field. These options have led to ambiguity. Changes have now been made to allow for more precise capture of absence data.

Some surveys are undertaken to actively search for particular species or species group, such as a threatened or cryptic species. When these targeted searches fail to find an individual there is a need to record that survey effort and the fact that no individuals of the target species were observed (absence).

Recording absence

BDBSA can now accommodate absence records. Users need to undertake the following steps:

- Project registration stage: Ensure that in the project metadata the method of searching for a species highlights the fact that absence was recorded. This is also reflected in the database with a Project Basis code of 'Presence and absence method' ('PA') that enables absence records to be entered.
- Field observation stage: Record the location, date and species details as normal and if no individuals of the target species were observed, record the number observed as 'none detected'.

The database will reject values for number observed of zero, null or 0 or blank values.

Recording presence

As part of the change to incorporate absence records, the user now has more options for recording presence because the number observed field is now in text format.

The type of options available, with examples, are:

- A number: 1, 2, 98, 65, 122
- A range: > 100, 1-50
- Text descriptions of number such as 'few', 'many', 'lots'. When using a description that is open to interpretation it is important that these descriptions are defined in the metadata.
- 'Present but not counted'. This option would be used if individuals of a species were observed but were not counted.

Accessing absence records

Absence records will not be included in the existing FLORA and FAUNA supertable layers.

Two new layers have been created to display all flora and fauna records that have 'number observed' entered as 'none detected':

- They should be used in conjunction with presence records for the project of interest.
- The absence layers are unfiltered and may include questionable records as well as those that have been accepted or not yet reviewed.

The absence layers are:

- FLORA.AbsenceUnfiltered
- FAUNA.AbsenceUnfiltered

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