



UK Overseas Territories Data access and Management – an emerging role for GBIF?

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Presentation

- Geographic and policy context
- Current data management initiatives in UKOTs
- UK's wildlife overseas: A stock take of nature in our overseas Territories
- Experience and lessons learnt
- Next steps



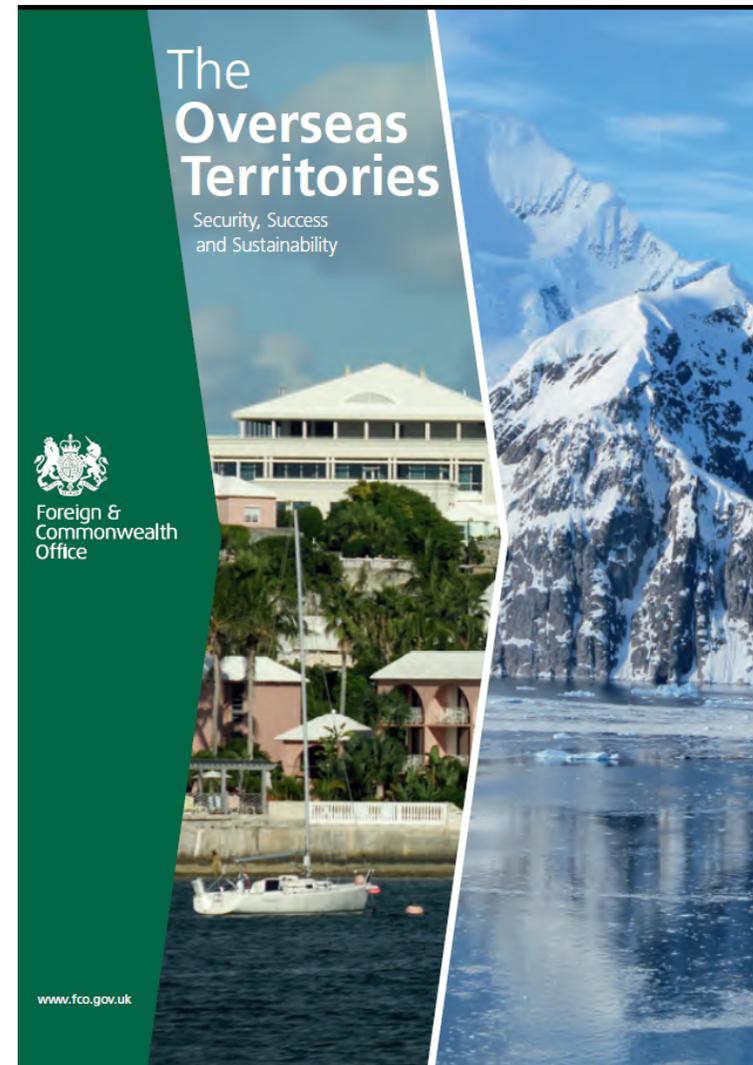
The UK Overseas Territories

- The UK has 14 Overseas Territories (OTs) which are scattered across the globe from Antarctica to the Pacific Ocean. 11 of the 14 are inhabited.
- Most are islands, but their size, latitude, biogeography, population and economies vary significantly.
- The inhabited OTs have populations that range from below 60 (Pitcairn) to above 60,000 (Bermuda).
- They are important in terms of biodiversity – e.g. many endemic species



Policy framework

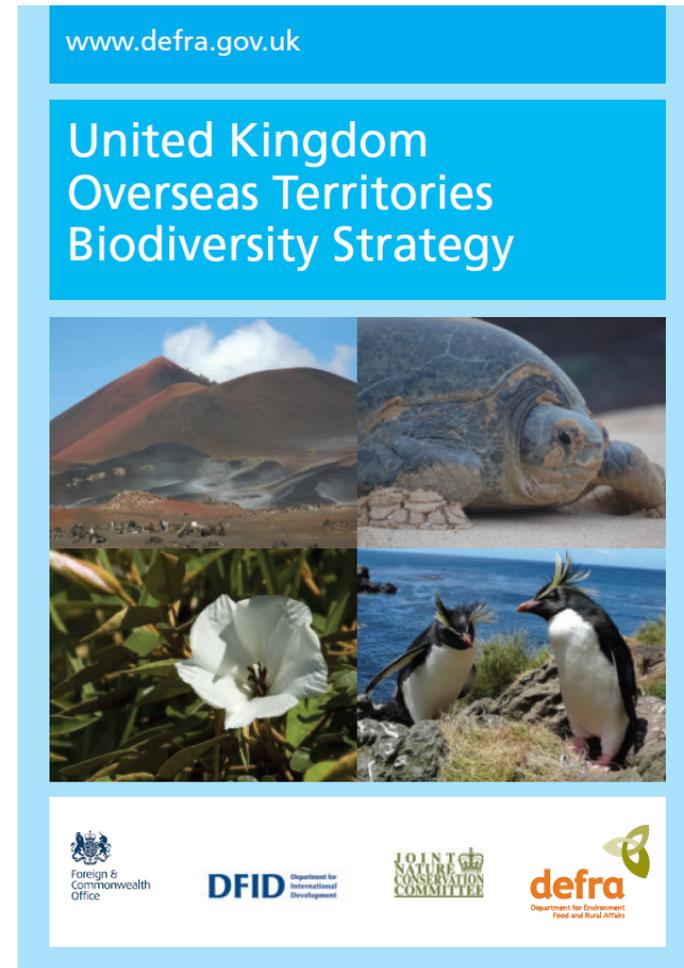
- UK Government's 2012 Overseas Territories White Paper 'Security, Success and Sustainability'
- Sets out that Territory Governments are constitutionally responsible for conserving biodiversity and for developing environmental policies
- The UK Government provides technical advice and expertise to enable the Territories to meet their environmental obligations.



Policy framework

- UK governments strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the Overseas Territories
- 1 of the 5 strategic priorities is focussed on data:

“obtaining data on the location and status of biodiversity interests and the human activities affecting biodiversity to inform the preparation of policies and management plans”

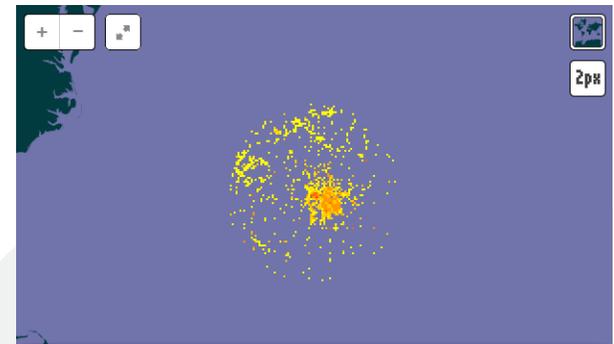


Current data management initiatives in UKOTs

- There are a number of initiatives that have been implemented around biodiversity data
- These have been at both territory level and across territory
- Mixed success – some success and some challenges
 - Develop and maintain capability is a problem
 - No common approach to data access and resources will be limited
- Does it present an opportunity for GBIF?

GBIF - what is available?

- Almost **half a million species observations** for the Overseas Territories
- This is impressive!
- About 20% provided by the UK (though only 3% if South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands are excluded)



UK's wildlife overseas :

A stock take of nature in
our overseas Territories



Overview

- Funded by UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Royal Society for Protection of Birds
- Set out to:
 - get an overview of the biodiversity known to occur on each of the island OTs
 - collate the number of native species that have been assessed using IUCN Red List criteria
 - collate monitoring data for native species, where available
 - identify the major knowledge gaps, in terms of species monitoring, Red Listing or simply cataloguing.

Approach

- Desk study to access sources (e.g. Web of Science / Google Scholar, GBIF etc)
- Contacted Government Departments within OTs, NGOs and research institutes
- Used initial contacts to build up a network of broader contacts
- Involved 600 published papers and over 100 individuals
- Initial outputs were reviewed and cleaned by experts
- Cost was £40k, of which £30k came from FCO, rest was RSPB co-funding

Analysis

Introduction

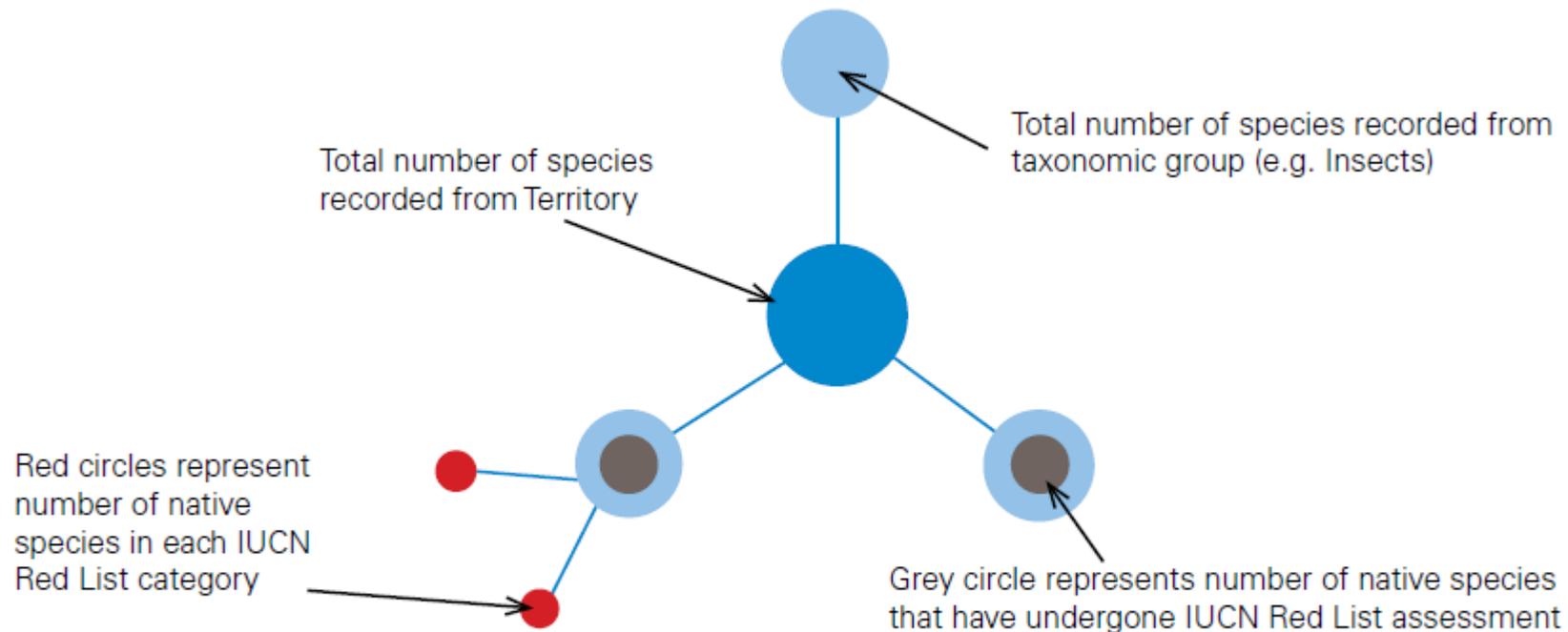
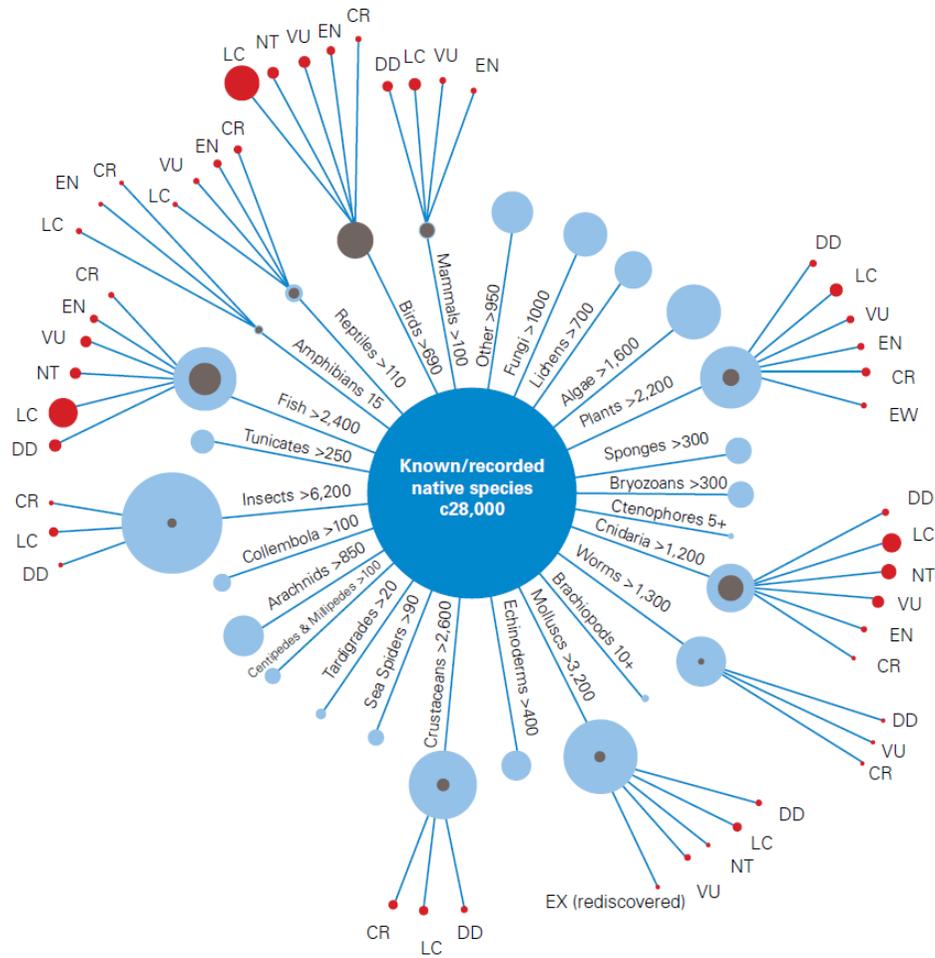


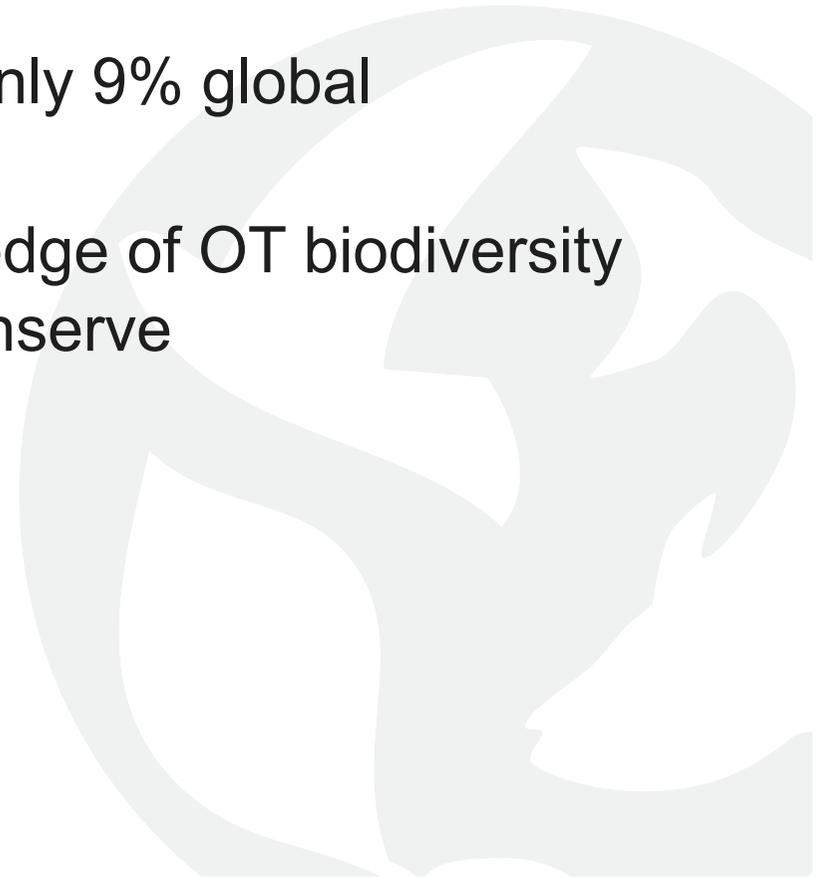
Figure 1. How to interpret infographics used in this report. The area of each circle is proportional to the number of species it represents.

Outputs



Conclusions of stock take

- The OTs hold at least 1,500 endemic species (compared with 90 in the UK)
- Much of this is threatened and only 9% global conservation status assessed
- Generally there is limited knowledge of OT biodiversity which is hampering efforts to conserve



Lesson 1: A stocktake is valuable

- Understanding what is there and its importance
- Setting some initial priorities (may evolve as we know more)
- Raising the profile (and perhaps investment)



Lesson 2: specimen digitisation

- Obviously the UK has more data for OTs within collections
- Digitisation is expensive and slow and is hard to target by geography (collections organised taxonomically)
- A stock take allows a taxonomic focus on digitisation down to those species that are of most interest / concern



Lesson 3: funding

- The funding source is the UK Foreign Office
- Also benefited from NGO co-funding
- The amount required is not high (one post for a year) and the output really helps to shape a strategy
- Can GBIF identify more opportunities here and can HoD help?



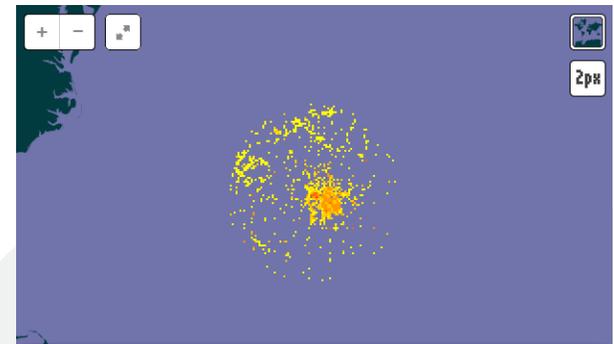
Lesson 4: capturing taxonomy

- One of the problems was unravelling taxonomy; expensive (except for marine)
- In fact a lot of the GBIF data was not used simply because of the taxonomy
- There seem to be limited mechanisms to capture this
- This area needs strengthening both technically and process within the big taxonomic providers



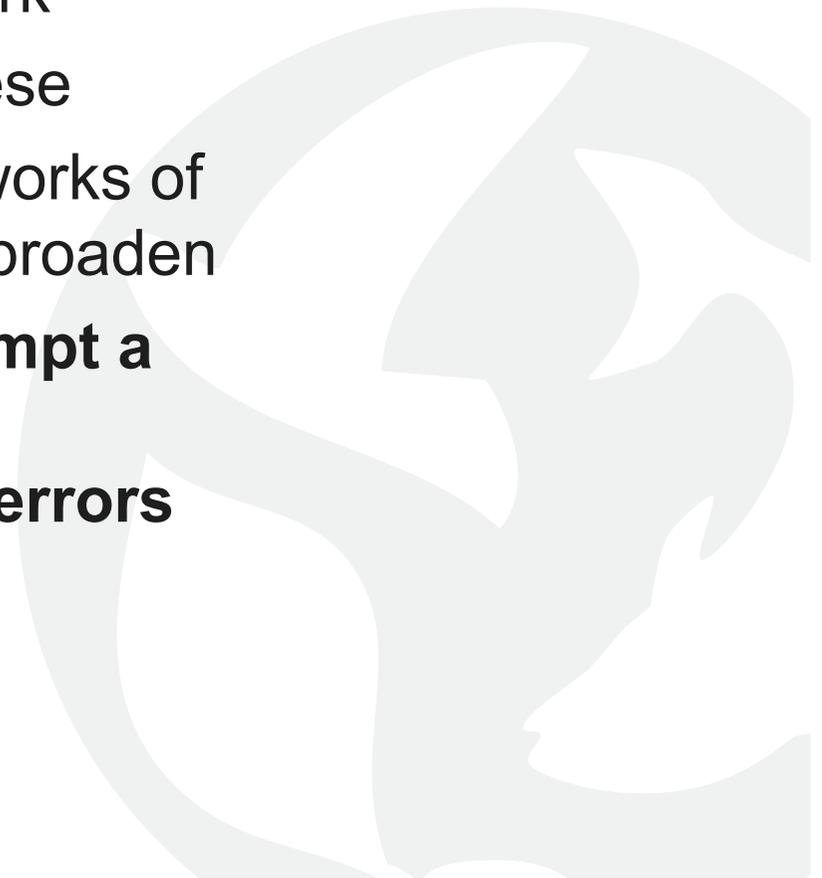
Lesson 5: a more interactive GBIF

- The data volume is impressive
- To make it more useful there needs to be ways to interact with the data – especially to tag records with quality and also taxonomy
- Also need improvements in taxonomic aggregators
- Look forward to the planned improvements in this area



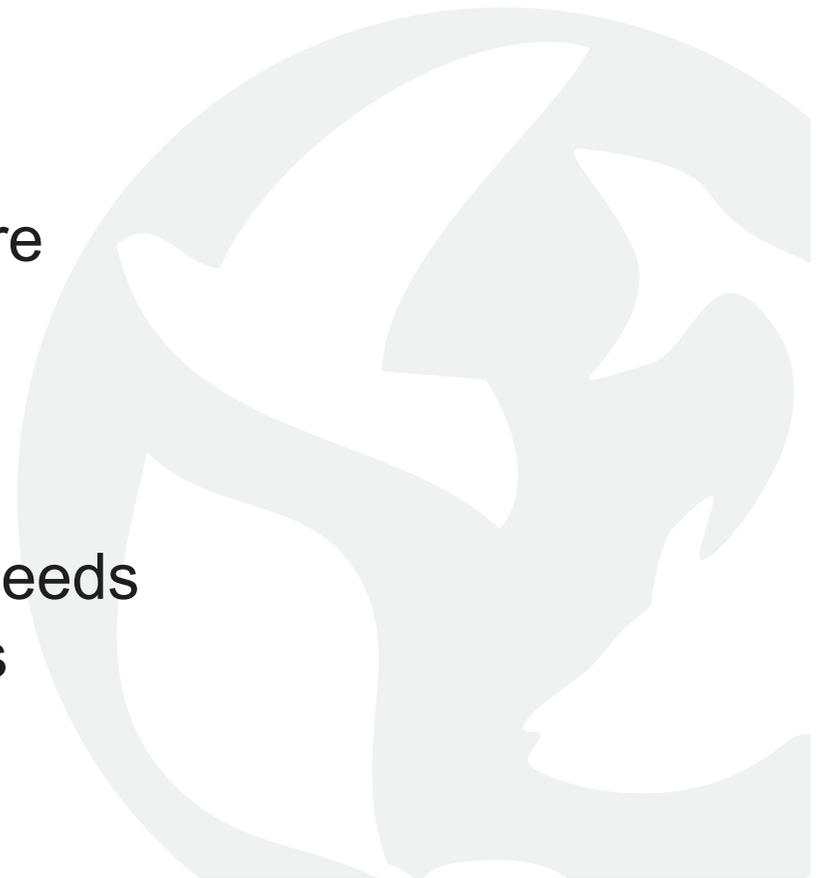
Lesson 6: expert networks

- Experts were fundamental to the stock take and have built a mini-network
- May be cross-overs between these
- GBIF has so far focused on networks of technical people – may need to broaden
- **“There’s no better way to prompt a response than give someone something they can point out errors and omissions in!”**



Lesson 7: build the local capability

- Really important to maintain engagement and build capability within the beneficiaries (and not doing it for them!)
- GBIF has already been good here (e.g. Mentoring)
- Need improvements in training materials
- The need to develop capability needs to be stressed with other funders



Next steps

- Publication (including GBIF) and repatriation of data
- Looking at Atlas Living Australia as portal
- Continue to refine the stock take
- Focus on what is important and build knowledge
- Look to integrate with other data types and sources to inform management
- Review of capability and skills needs and a strategy to develop these



Pilot: South Atlantic Information Management Centre

- Will look at:
 - people
 - data
 - systems
- Sustainability is key



<http://www.south-atlantic-research.org/>

Summary

- Stocktake is a useful starting tool / approach – may not be that expensive
- GBIF really helped:
 - 0.5 million records from all over the world
 - Useful functionality and context
 - Can now publish other material
 - May reuse Atlas of Living Australia – importance of community
- Engaging with the experts is critical
- But:
 - GBIF needs to be more interactive with data (quality)
 - Need to look at improving the taxonomy services