

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR



## WoRMS needs YOU! A Reply to Collareta *et al.* 2020

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Editorial Note: “This response to Collareta *et al.* (2020) was reviewed by several taxonomists, all who expressed a degree of misgiving about the editorial processes and protocols involved in the revision of the Thoracica and publication of this revision in WoRMS. It is critical that future editors ensure that any taxonomic revision is supported by peer-reviewed publication.”

The World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS Editorial Board 2020) is a community-driven effort to provide an authoritative and comprehensive list of names of marine organisms (Horton *et al.* 2017; Vandepitte *et al.* 2018). The only way to achieve this goal is through broad-scale collaboration between taxonomic experts from a wide range of disciplines, regions, and backgrounds. The past 13 years have been a story of achievements, with more than 500 taxonomic and thematic editors volunteering their time to participate in the creation of this unique and freely available resource.

WoRMS is truly collaborative and does not rely on the taxonomic editors alone to improve its content and functionality. The input of its users is critical to the work of WoRMS, to provide feedback, spot omissions, and errors, and in making suggestions for improved tools and new features that the community needs. The support of the Data Management Team, in processing the numerous enquiries from users, answering or directing them to the right editor, and ensuring they are dealt with swiftly, is also key to the success of the database.

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We write this plea for direct contact with the WoRMS team in response to a letter published in July 2020 in *Integrative Zoology* (Collareta *et al.* 2020) highlighting the issue of unsupported taxonomic changes in WoRMS. In February 2020, a number of changes were made to the higher taxonomy of the thoracican barnacles within WoRMS which were not backed up by a published, citable source, an erroneous action, not in line with the WoRMS best practice guidelines (Horton *et al.* 2017). We are pleased to be able to report that the issue was dealt with in WoRMS *as soon as the DMT were made aware of the issue and well before the letter by Collareta et al. was published.* The issue was brought to the attention of a member of the WoRMS Steering Committee on April 15, 2020, and the unsupported changes were rolled back by the WoRMS data management team by April 23, 2020. It took only a single week to correct the majority of unsupported changes *once they were known to the WoRMS Data Management Team and the WoRMS Steering Committee.* Likewise, a few that had been missed in the first roll-back were swiftly rectified (before end of August) upon notification (August 14, 2020). We, therefore, want to reiterate the message that we have tried to convey these past thirteen years:

### WoRMS need YOU!

If you notice any errors or omissions in WoRMS, we ask that you please simply contact us at [info@marinespecies.org](mailto:info@marinespecies.org), rather than writing editorials, BLOGS, or publishing about them. Once the WoRMS Data Management Team have been alerted to the issue, then the feedback can be logged and dealt with swiftly and efficiently by either addressing it directly or rerouting

it to the responsible editor and/or the WoRMS Steering Committee. It would be most useful if you can also provide relevant documents/research papers together with your feedback to help us processing your feedback quickly.

If we do not know about the problem, we cannot fix it—but we do promise to work to solve issues once we are informed of them. Working together as a community, we can improve WoRMS for all users.

## REFERENCES

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