RESOURCE NOTES

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An Automated Species Tracking System

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Background

It appears that BLM professionals are no longer able to do more with less. It now appears that we are lucky to maintain the current level of activity. In order to assist with information handling problems, we have a species tracking system developed in MS Access that allows for tracking of species occurrence, habitat, condition, etc. The basis of the system was the Special Status Species Tracking (SSST) developed on a UNIX/Informix platform. However, that system requires a tremendous amount of software support that the general user cannot accomplish and for which user support is becoming more difficult to obtain in a timely manner.
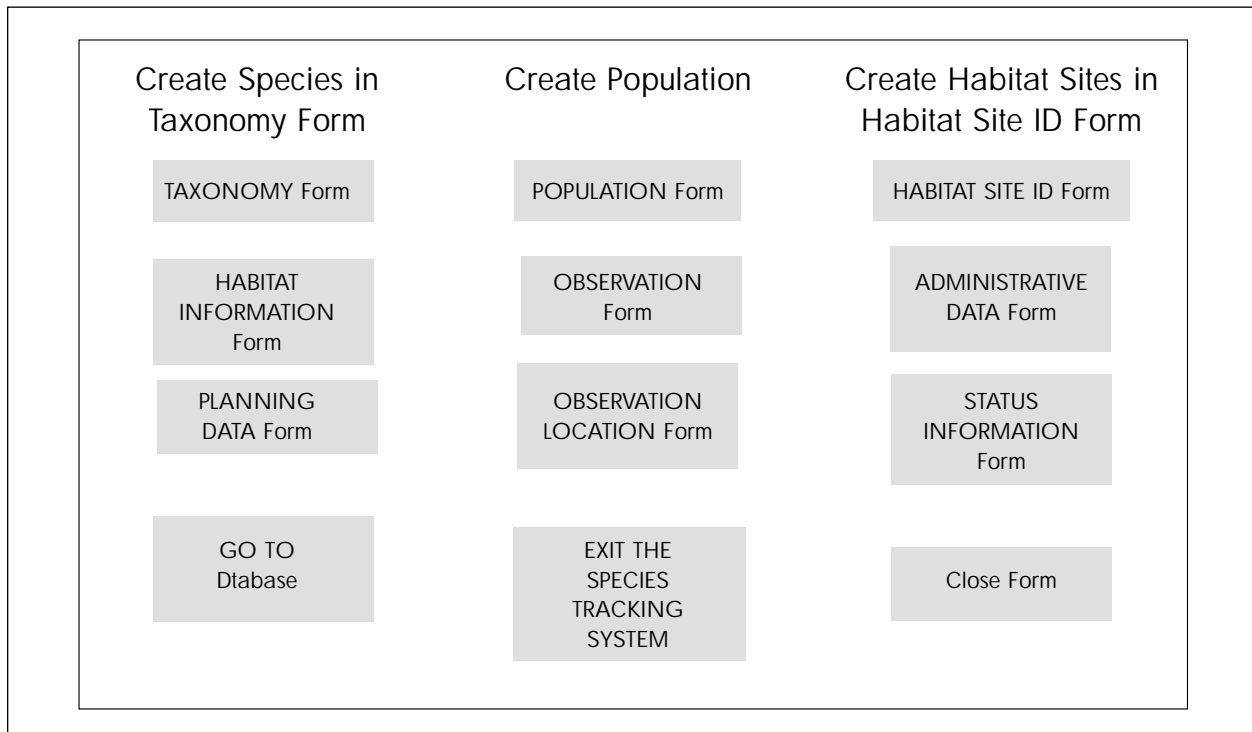
Discussion

Recent FOIA requests have highlighted the fragility of the existing wildlife data systems to recover data in a usable format. The Species Tracking System was developed to address data access problems and to provide an automated system that the users can customize to their needs. The STS runs on Windows with MS Access. It is a simple menu-driven system that allows users to track data in the forms shown below. Clicking on any one of the twelve buttons will open data entry forms for that particular information area. Taxonomy, population and habitat site id must be completed before additional data can be entered.

Installation of STS is a one step process: Copy the provided STS.MDB file to the directory that you want to use for your wildlife type information. Start MS Access through the Start/Program/Microsoft Access route, or by an Icon on the desktop if you have one. When you start MS Access a list of database files appears with the first choice being "more files...". With the initial use of STS, select "more files" and then choose the path to the directory where you put the STS.MDB file. Once there, double click on the STS.MDB file and the STS program will start and display the "Front Page" menu described in the next part. The next time you start MS Access, STS should be one of the choices on the initial list and can be started by double clicking the file name.

All data entry forms have three things in common, a button to add a new record, a button to search for

Create Species in Taxonomy Form	Create Population	Create Habitat Sites in Habitat Site ID Form
TAXONOMY Form	POPULATION Form	HABITAT SITE ID Form
HABITAT INFORMATION Form	OBSERVATION Form	ADMINISTRATIVE DATA Form
PLANNING DATA Form	OBSERVATION LOCATION Form	STATUS INFORMATION Form
GO TO Dtabase	EXIT THE SPECIES TRACKING SYSTEM	Close Form

an existing record, and a button to close the form. Several forms have buttons to access additional forms where you can provide supplemental information. If you have added new data or changed an existing record, using the "close form" button will save the new data. If you use the "escape" key, the new data will NOT be saved.

Information is tracked essentially three ways, by SPECIES, by POPULATION, and by HABITAT. When entering data into the system, it is necessary to complete the above three forms first. If subsequent observations or other changes in data occur, you can utilize the existing population/taxonomy/habitat site data so you only need to enter it once.

All data is tracked by species and/or populations. It may seem strange to track an individual animal as a "population," but for locational purposes and to help identify possible larger populations, it becomes necessary. The location information can be utilized by Arc View for a graphic view of species distribution.

Perhaps the most usable feature about STS is that it can be easily modified to meet the users' needs, either through changing existing data elements or by adding new data elements. All of these changes can be quickly modified to merge into the existing format or an entirely new data base can be created.

For the user that is comfortable with using data bases, data query is very simple with a "point and click" type query language. For casual users of the data base, standard reports can be quickly formatted and saved for future use.

Conclusion
The STS program was developed to run on a PC under Windows with a simple menu driven system that can be quickly modified to meet specific user needs. The data resides on the users local PC and is under their control. The system will expedite external requests for data. Being able to map "populations" will allow for easier identification of habitat overlap by species, shifts in population locations, and shifts in pattern of use. More importantly, it can provide information on T/E and sensitive species in a timely manner that can be used in biological assessments and EAs.

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