

Dear NOW Community,

Hope you are well. The past months in NOW were intensive in preparation for the move of the server, which now happily resides at the Finnish Museum of Natural History. The gateway to the database remains unchanged <https://nowdatabase.org/>.

The interface has received a facelift and you may notice that it is also slightly faster. Several functions have been added to the interface, one of which is a technical possibility to merge duplicate localities if such are found. Since there are no practical or meaningful ways to track uniqueness of locality names across the world, for taxonomic names, and some localities can be referred to by the name of a place (in different spellings), the name of the formation, numbers or even informal names like “hyrax hill”, sometimes the same locality can make it to the database under different names. Let Kari or me know if you notice any remaining cases of duplicate localities while working with NOW.

Another addition, or rather expansion of NOW interface is in the dental traits area, which now includes space for specialized traits of carnivores. The initiative is led by Tony Frisca, the interface is ready and data on those is starting to come to the database.

One active ongoing initiative a possibility for archaeological information including presence of cutmarks on bones or stone tool technology at mammalian sites. This, of course, applies only to the latest part of the Cenozoic and there are archaeological databases for that, but quite many of NOW Community members are interested in possibilities to have such data that would be curated in normal NOW ways and directly tied to mammalian sites. This is not yet visible in NOW in any way, the idea is in the active planning phase. The initiative is led by Miriam Belmaker and Miikka Tallavaara, let them or me know if you have any suggestions, ideas or criticisms regarding this.

NOW data curation by the community members has been more active than usual perhaps partially in relation to the submission deadline for NOW chapters. That’s wonderful. Isaac Casanovas Vilar, Melike Bilgin, Diana Pushkina, Miriam Belmaker, Jelle Zijlstra, Lars van den Hoek Ostende, Otto Oksanen, Jan van der Made, Chiara Angelone, Raef Minwer-Barakat, Anu Kaakinen have been most active editors in the last months.

Jelle Zijlstra is starting an interesting work in defining systematic database scans to flag potential errors in data, following the initiative by Lars van den Hoek Ostende. Flagged data then enters the registry for curatorial checks, along with any potential errors or suspicious cases noted manually by all NOW users and editors. Please keep reporting any potential errors that you notice, even small either by using the “Contact” button on the bottom left of the NOW interface, or e-mail to Kari Lintulaakso or me.

We still have no news about the NOW anniversary celebration meeting, as many plans meeting these days it will depend on how the pandemic situation will develop. It is clear that the meeting will not happen in 2021, but the summer of 2022 is still an open possibility. Let’s see what the future brings.

Meanwhile, it was very nice to see many of you at the NOW Awards ceremony online. Over 40 participants attended, which is more than a third of the NOW Board. I've heard a lot of good feedback. We'll try to do it again.

All be well,
Indrè

General Coordinator of NOW