

How to upload photos (records) to the Virtual Museum (VM)

Johan van Rooyen

Version 2021-01-25

Please note: Don't be concerned if this guideline appears complicated. After you have done it a few times, it becomes second nature. The guideline will hopefully avoid some of the little pitfalls that could cause a lot of frustration.

1. Register

If you have a registration number from SABAP2 you use that with the same password on VM.

If you don't, then you have to register. Go to the VM website at <http://vmus.adu.org.za/> and click on "Registration" on the menu on the left. Follow the link to the SABAP2 website and complete the form and submit.

2. Prepare information

It is important to prepare the information properly before starting the process on the website, or else you may find important information missing while you are trying to submit a record.

a. General locality information

- Country
- Province
- Closest town (but rest camp in Kruger or Kgalagadi will do)
- Locality (description like farm name, suburb, pentad number). This field is compulsory but just requires some text in it. This is information to assist the operators of the system to detect problems that may have occurred with the feeding in of coordinates.

b. Coordinates

This is a very big source of errors/mistakes in submitting data because there are so many formats in which coordinates are given. Please pay close attention to this paragraph. It is not difficult, but it requires attention to detail.

- There are many ways to get the coordinates
 - Use the map on the VM website when submitting photos. This is the **easiest method** with the smallest potential to make mistakes. The only condition is that you must be able to find the spot on the map from where the photo was taken (or come close to it). This will work well if you go to a place like a sewage works, or a bridge over a river, and take the bulk of your photos from there for the trip. However, if you are driving over long distances for the day, you will not remember where you have taken specific photos and it will be better to use one of the following methods. Using Google Earth to plot your position is similar to using the map on VM, but then you still have

to copy the coordinates to VM and the formats are slightly different and can be the source of errors.

- The **next best option** is to use one of many available cellphone GPS apps to get coordinates. The trick is to take a photo of your cellphone showing the coordinates just after you have taken the photo of the subject. You then have the coordinates on a photo just after your photos of the subjects and there can be no confusion about where you were.
- When photographing a bird you can use BirdLasser (BL) to log the bird and then later read the coordinates from BL. This is similar to taking a picture of the coordinates on the cell phone but will obviously only work for birds.
- **Formats for coordinates**
 - VM accepts coordinates in all three basic formats i.e.
 - degrees and decimal degrees (dd.dddd);
 - degrees minutes and decimal minutes (dd mm.mmmm); and
 - degrees minutes and seconds (dd mm ss).
 - However VM requires them without the notations for degrees, minutes and seconds and specific notations for South and East depending on which format is used.
 - If you don't want to get bogged down in the various formats please use the simplest one of dd.ddddd. Ensure that the settings of your GPS (on the cellphone, or a stand-alone GPS) is set on dd.ddddd. BirdLasser's coordinates is set in this format.
 - The only little notation to get right is for the latitude where VM requires a minus (-) in front for the southern hemisphere. If you leave it out, your Stilbaai bird is going to plot somewhere in the Mediterranean Sea. Some of the GPS apps does not show the (-) and you will have to add it in when copying the information to VM.
 - If you want to use any of the other types of coordinates please read the detail explanations on VM at http://vmus.adu.org.za/vm_coords.php

c. Photos

Photos must show the subject as well as possible and must be less than 1 MB in size.

- First crop your photo to cut out unnecessary background and to "enlarge" the subject.
- Then resize it (if still larger than 1 MB). Refrain from making it too small. Sizes between 200 KB and 1 MB should be fine.
- If you don't have a photo editor to do the above then FastStone Image Viewer can be recommended. It is free, very user friendly, and can do many things to enhance a photo. It won't try to organise your photos on your computer. Also download and read the FastStone Tutorial (but you will soon get the hang of it).

3. Upload your data (locality and photos)

Uploading the record is not complicated.

Go to the VM website and log in; and then click on “Data upload” on the left. The page that opens has the following heading

VM Data & Photo Submission

VM Record Upload Form - Page 1 of 2

Uploading happens in two steps, first the general and locality information and then the uploading of the photo(s).

1. Observer information:

Your name and number should already be filled in by the system. You can add additional observers who don't have to be registered. Just fill in their names.

2. Date of observation:

Date of observation – fill in the date of the first observation at this locality. You may have photos for later dates at this locality, but you can change the date when uploading the photo.

3. Collection locality, using gazetteer:

In the “Locality name block” will appear favourite localities that you have already loaded (see under 4 lower down). If you already have a locality loaded, you can click on the arrow of the dropdown menu, click on the correct locality and click save. You will then skip step 4.

- Country – South Africa is the default. Use another from the dropdown menu if applicable
- Province – not compulsory, but fill in from the dropdown menu if you know it
- Closest town – your best guess
- Locality – some description of farm name, suburb, north-west of certain town, waterhole in Kgalagadi, pentad number etc.
- Altitude – not compulsory
- Coordinates – (if you want to use the VM map go to Step 5) if not copy (or type) the coordinates you have prepared into the blocks. Make sure you have the latitude and longitude in the correct blocks (Latitude comes first in alphabetical order and it also is the first coordinate in a set. Longitude is the second coordinate in the set.).
 - Source – click one of the sources as indicated. If you use a GPS, an app on your cellphone or BirdLasser, click GPS

- Accuracy – the number that you must fill in here is how far you estimate the subject was away from you when taking the photo. It is not the accuracy of your GPS. It could also reflect your uncertainty of how accurate you have read your position from a map etc. The distance is in meters, **but don't add the "m" in the box**. Your uploading will bomb out and you will not know why!
- Gazetteer locality name - use this only if you will submit photos for this place many times i.e. your home or a favorite watering hole in Kruger. In the block "Locality name" you fill in a name of your choice for later use i.e. "Stilbaai sewage works" or "Stilbaai home" etc. This name will then be saved for later use and will save time when you upload photos for the same place later. The name you use here is only visible and available to you. If you are not going to use the same locality often you just leave this open.

5. Collection locality, finding coordinates:

- If you could not determine coordinates beforehand by other means, you can now use this map to zoom in and plot the location of your photo. It is, however, better to get it beforehand and then you skip this step.

6. Save and continue to record upload:

- If you have made a big mess of something you must not click "Save" but click "Clear" and start all over again.
- Click "Save" and wait for the upload form to appear. If you have missed one of the compulsory fields it will go back to that field and it will be marked in red. Fill it in and come back to "Save".
- If everything is in order the following page will appear and the second part of the process can follow

VM Data & Photo Submission

VM Record Upload Form - Page 2 of 2

Observation information:

- “Observation information” is already loaded. If you discover that something is wrong, abort and start again with a new data upload
- Please note that there is space provided to upload 3 records for the same locality. Complete “Record 1” and then go on to “Record 2” and then “Record 3”. Skip to point 6 below if you have less than 3 records for the same locality. If you have more than 3 records for the same locality, you can click “add more” under point 6 and 3 more blank forms will open.

Record 1:

- Click the relevant project for which you have a photo
- “Date of observation” – make sure the date is correct and change if necessary
- “Photos” (Note: you can upload 3 photos for the same record. They may be from different angles and could assist with identification). Click on “Choose file” and select the photo from your folders.
- “Sound bite” Select the sound bite if you have any to support your record.
- “Identity” – here you can fill in your identification for the species on the photo. If you are unsure, leave it out. Your guess at the identity will stay on the record.
- “Notes” Type any additional information here i.e. something you have observed about the habit of the bird/animal.

Record 2:

- Ditto for record 2

Record 3:

- Ditto for record 3

6. Save and continue to record upload:

- If you have more than 3 records for the same location, click the “add more” button and then click “Submit”.
- It will take a bit of time, but another 3 blank record forms will open and you can continue uploading.
- When you have uploaded the last record for the location click on “Submit”
- It will take a bit of time to upload your record(s), but eventually a page will open that shows

Data Upload Management

List of records uploaded

Click on record number or image to display full details.

Display thumb-nails only

Search found 1 record.



VM-Upload No. : 563524

Observer: Van Rooyen Johan en Estelle; date: 2018-04-28. Northern Cape, South Africa. [3017DC](#)

Record status: PENDING.

Display thumb-nails only

Search found 1 record.

To upload more records click on “Data upload” on the menu on the left and start again.

The records now go through 3 stages

- Pending
- Accepted
- Identified

To check on the status of your records

- click on “Projects” on the menu
- click on the project for which you have submitted records (i.e. BirdPix)
- on the menu on the left “BirdPix” will show
- click on “My records”
- all the records that have moved from “Pending” to “Accepted” will show here. It may take some time for all pending records to move to accepted
- it will take even more time for the identifications to be made. Be patient, but if nothing has happened after 7 days, contact Johan van Rooyen and supply the “BirdPix No.” for the record that is still outstanding.

How to explore the Virtual Museum’s data will be explained in a following document.