



OBIS Nodes Coordination Group meeting #9 February 12, 2026

The two sessions of the meeting have been blended into a single report wherever possible for clarity and completeness. The meeting slides are available [here](#). The text of this summary was edited with the help of AI.

Introduction

Co-Chairs John Nicholls (first session) and Maria Cornthwaite (second session) welcomed participants. They reiterated the intention behind the revised structure of the NCG meetings: to create more space for Node discussion and peer exchange while maintaining regular updates from OBIS coordination bodies.

Flash talks

OBIS Japan: A flash talk by Takashi Hosono, OBIS Japan Node Manager

Takashi Hosono introduced the OBIS Japan Node, which is hosted by JAMSTEC (Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology) and operates under the Global Oceanographic DATA Center (GODAC), in Okinawa. The Node team has seven members, five of whom have completed OBIS training and obtained certification. The Node operates three websites and an internally developed data validation system.

Key priorities for 2026 include identifying new eDNA data providers, organising a workshop on the use of OBIS data for the Japanese marine community, and promoting OBIS to stakeholders, particularly in the context of BBNJ engagement in Japan.

Hosono highlighted two areas where collaboration is actively sought: co-applicants for biodiversity research funding (including private grant opportunities available in Japan), and research collaborators, such as a data provider in Okinawa monitoring sea turtles who is seeking connections with other OBIS regions working on similar species. Local government

interest in collaborations was also noted, with Toba City and Yokohama City wishing to compare their coastal biodiversity data with other regions. Nodes interested in any of these collaborations were invited to reach out to OBIS Japan directly

→ **Muhammad Hafiz Borkhanuddin** (OBIS Malaysia) asked about the nature of the grant opportunities mentioned. Hosono clarified that multiple grant opportunities are available.

The slides are [here](#).

OBIS Eastern South Pacific (ESP-OBIS), a Flash Talk by Braulio Fernandez, ESP-OBIS data manager

ESP-OBIS covers the Eastern South Pacific region, with a particular focus on the Humboldt Current System, a region that is significantly underrepresented in global biodiversity databases. The Node was established in 2004, growing out of the Census of Marine Life project, and is hosted at the University of Concepción in Chile, and managed by Dr. Pamela Hidalgo. Funding has evolved over time from direct OBIS support to independent research projects, and since 2016 has been provided by the Faculty of Natural and Oceanographic Sciences from the University of Concepción.

ESP-OBIS currently holds 20 published datasets covering over 9,000 occurrence records, with a further three datasets in preparation. A recent collaboration with the university's natural history museum is expected to yield additional marine datasets. The Node has a strong academic training component, actively encouraging undergraduate, master's, and PhD students to publish their thesis datasets. To date, 12 student datasets have been published, with two more in progress. Activities include five training courses (one delivered just before the NCG meeting), participation in data mobilisation workshops, presentations at scientific conferences, and eight scientific publications based on OBIS data, with one recently accepted and two in preparation.

The ESP-OBIS Node is an active member of the OBIS LAC working group and is currently organising activities under a recently accepted POGO project aimed at strengthening capacity in the LAC region. A recent GBIF BID project proposal focused on mobilising data from underrepresented marine areas was also submitted on 2 February 2026, with results pending.

The slides are [here](#).

OBIS USA, a Flash Talk by Mathew Biddle, OBIS USA Node Manager

Mathew Biddle introduced himself as the incoming Node manager for OBIS USA, taking over the role following Steve Formel's move to the OBIS Secretariat. Biddle works at NOAA as part

of the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) Office. He emphasised that NOAA remains committed to supporting OBIS USA over the long term.

One of the most recent key actions—and a strategic move—at OBIS USA was to grant IPT accessibility to all data managers part of NOAA's Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS), to lower the barrier to data publication. This resulted in a noticeable increase in the rate at which datasets are being published. Other recent activities include a data mobilisation workshop held in November 2025 despite a complicated institutional context, as well as focused workshops on mobilising data from different observing technologies, including animal telemetry (with input from OTN), plankton monitoring, and passive acoustic monitoring. Active coordination around eDNA data publication is also underway.

A notable recent milestone was the publication of 289 datasets of satellite animal telemetry data through the IPT, comprising approximately 49,000 records. This was achieved by automating IPT interactions, an approach co-developed OBIS OTN that drastically reduces publishing barriers.

OTTER: OBIS Node-to-Node programme implementation proposal

Presented by John Nicholls & Maria Cornthwaite, OBIS NCG Co-Chairs

The OBIS Training and Technical Exchange Resource (OTTER) was presented as a structural evolution of peer support within the OBIS network, aiming to transition from fragmented exchanges toward a documented and discoverable knowledge ecosystem. The [implementation proposal](#) is open to comments, suggestions, and feedback from the Nodes until the end of February 2026.

The implementation proposal is structured around:

→ A dedicated Discourse space reserved for OBIS Nodes

The [Discourse platform](#) was selected for its tagging and categorisation capabilities, long-term archiving, multilingual translation plugins, and community moderation features. The space is currently publicly visible, meaning anyone with the address can read discussions, though only registered members can participate. During the meeting, Nodes were asked for their preferences on whether to keep it public or move to a fully private setup.

→ The OBIS FAQ as a living output

The OBIS FAQ would gather flagged content from all OBIS support channels (Helpdesk,

GitHub, and Discourse). When a question receives a vetted answer, the discussion can be flagged, lightly edited, and added to the FAQ with contributor attribution.

→ **Multilingual access**

This will be achieved through automatic translation of Discourse posts and the use of the FAQ as a stable multilingual reference point.

→ **Recognition mechanisms for contributors**

This mechanism includes attribution in FAQ entries, a recap page on obis.org listing active contributors, and annual letters of appreciation from the Secretariat. Additional options, such as digital badges or certificates, are under exploration.

A phased migration of the Slack #support channel to a new open-to-all support channel on Discourse, where resolved issues can also be flagged for the FAQ, was proposed. Other Slack functions would remain, such as individual or group messaging for fast queries: Participants were reminded that Slack remains best suited to fast, direct exchanges between individuals, while Discourse is intended for discussions where broader community involvement and long-term retention are needed.

Ruben Perez Perez (DCG Co-Chair) asked whether specific topics could remain private, highlighting potential sensitivities around some discussions. John Nicholls responded that the team will explore options for isolating specific threads or making the entire space private if needed, and encouraged Nodes to share their preferences.

Johnny Konjarla (IndOBIS) asked whether FAQ entries would be automatically generated or reviewed by administrators. The Co-Chairs confirmed that admin oversight will remain in place for quality control at this stage, with the possibility of moving toward greater automation in the future.

Sachit Rajbhandari (OBIS Australia) asked whether OTTER would replace the Slack #support channel. John Nicholls clarified that migration will be gradual and Slack will remain available, but long-term discussions should shift to Discourse to avoid loss of information.

Johnny Konjarla further asked about response times and whether queries could be closed if unanswered. The Co-Chairs indicated that response expectations will remain flexible, with admins monitoring activity during early adoption. Laurent Chmiel added that Secretariat members will initially help guide participation and encourage engagement until new habits are established — for example, by flagging relevant open questions to community members who might be able to answer them.

Catching up: So, what have you been up to for the last two

months? A low-effort tool to get updates flowing among Nodes

Presented by John Nicholls & Maria Cornthwaite, OBIS NCG Co-Chairs

This [Google Sheet](#) is designed to capture Node activities between meetings. Entries can cover anything from recent events and publications to ideas and questions for future discussion. The board is designed to remain open between meetings, with tabs intended to evolve over time.

Ruben Perez Perez suggested that some entries could evolve into Discourse topics to stimulate deeper discussions. Muhammad Hafiz Bin Borkhanuddin (OBIS Malaysia) asked whether photos or media could be uploaded directly, and Laurent Chmiel clarified that links should be shared instead of files to keep the system lightweight. Participants broadly agreed that the board offers a simple way to maintain visibility of Node activities while generating discussion topics organically.

Steering Group Updates

Presented by Dan Lear & Katherine Tattersall, OBIS SG Co-Chairs

The two SG Co-Chairs, Dan Lear (OBIS UK) and Katherine Tattersall (OBIS Australia), participated in a week-long row of meetings in Ostend in early February alongside the OBIS Secretariat.

OBIS-GOOS meeting

This follow-up meeting with the GOOS BioEco team focused on the GOOS Biodiversity Plan that was presented to the OBIS Nodes at the Living Data 2025 Conference in Bogotá. The SG Co-Chairs have since reviewed the plan and assessed the plan's responsibility mix between OBIS and GOOS. The plan still needs to pass through their GOOS' decision-making bodies, with further iterations expected before it returns to the OBIS Executive Committee for additional comments and assessment.

IODE Management Group Meeting

The IODE Management Group meeting covered the structure and evolving priorities of the IOC, a wider IOC communications plan, the OBIS work plan and budget, IODE–GOOS collaboration at a broader level beyond biodiversity data, and a dedicated session on repository sustainability and resilience scoring. A framework for assessing repository resilience was presented, and information from that session is expected to be shared with the broader community soon, through a public report from the meeting. The Co-Chairs noted that restructuring at the IOC level is ongoing, and how this will affect IODE is still evolving.

OBIS-GBIF meeting

The meeting focused on implementing the collaboration agreement re-signed in Bogotá at the end of 2025. Discussions centred on two main areas: how to streamline and align the publication of eDNA data between the two infrastructures, and how to coordinate on indexing datasets more efficiently, to avoid parallel or redundant processes on both sides. Broader collaboration opportunities were also explored, including training and communication. OBIS is also exploring joint activities with GBIF around European BioMon Week, to be held in Montpellier in early May 2026, with potential sessions on EOVS–EBV alignment, data standards, eDNA, and data flows between infrastructures.

Next IODE Steering Group for OBIS meeting (SG-OBIS-14)

The next OBIS Steering Group meeting (SG-OBIS-14) will be held in Ostend from 11–16 November, back-to-back with the World Conference on Marine Biodiversity in Bruges.

Data Coordination Group Updates

Presented by Ruben Perez Perez, OBIS DCG Co-Chair, and Katherine Tattersall with Dan Lear, OBIS SG Co-Chairs

The DCG Co-Chairs presented short updates on the group's 2026 deliverables and associated work and discussions. They reminded the NCG that the DCG is open membership and contributions to these items from across our broad community are welcome and encouraged.

DCG's push on capacity development

On capacity development, Nodes were invited to help design upcoming workshops. Participation doesn't necessarily require acting as a trainer: Contributions can include identifying topics, suggesting trainers, or shaping workshop outlines. Nodes interested in contributing were encouraged to contact the DCG directly or through the Secretariat.

Taxonomic validators wanted

A small group is being trained as taxonomic validators to review automated annotations in WoRMS. Nodes with taxonomy expertise were invited to participate.

Collaboration with GBIF on the Darwin Core Data Package how-to guide

Nodes were encouraged to promote Event Core and Darwin Core Data Package formats with their data providers. The Darwin Core Data Package how-to guide, planned as a joint effort with GBIF, is currently on standby on both sides due to resourcing constraints, though this may evolve in the coming months. Separately, Pieter Provoost will be attending a workshop with the

GBIF Secretariat in Copenhagen focused on indexing complex datasets, which is expected to bring further alignment on this topic.

EOVs

The DCG is developing a plan for EOV tagging, starting with seagrass and marine mammals datasets, as part of the OBIS involvement in operationalizing Essential Ocean Variables.

eDNA Training

Due to a lack of funding for a training officer, the focus has shifted toward documenting the structure of a future course and updating the eDNA data publishing manual. Recent eDNA datasets are being sought for use as case studies.

→ **Muhammad Hafiz Borkhanuddin** (OBIS Malaysia) asked whether laboratory protocols or bioinformatics workflows should be included. Ruben clarified that dataset examples are needed first to inform course design decisions, and invited interested Nodes to join the subgroup to help shape the course content.

Artificial Intelligence

A new thematic team has been established to explore AI usage of OBIS data and develop a possible acknowledgement statement or guidance. This group is currently in an exploratory phase; both the DCG and PCG noted this as a high-priority topic. Steve Formel noted a key challenge: existing OBIS data has already been licensed, but in ways that did not anticipate AI usage. The process will therefore involve retrofitting existing published data to fit AI usage. The group had taken an early look at Creative Commons signals licensing as one option.

→ **Andreas Altenburger** (OBIS Norway) raised concerns about publishing ancient sedimentary DNA datasets, where ageing uncertainty (DNA extracted from sediment cores may represent occurrences thousands of years old) may affect occurrence interpretation, and was encouraged to open a Discourse discussion to explore emerging guidelines and metadata approaches.

Products Coordination Group Updates

Presented by Silas Principe, OBIS Secretariat Researcher, as well as Steve Formel and Jon Pye, OBIS PCG Co-Chairs

OBIS Product Catalogue

The CKAN-based product catalogue remains technically challenging: after a working implementation was demonstrated in December, the instance went down. Steve Formel prepared a simpler static website alternative, but the group concluded that the programmatic services offered by CKAN are necessary, particularly for supporting the work plan objective of making products useful for national and regional policy integration. The PCG has decided to continue investing in the CKAN approach. Outreach to the Canadian CKAN community

([CLOOS](#)) is already underway, as their well-established and heavily extended implementation is seen as a valuable reference. Updates are expected at the next PCG meeting on 13 April. **A test instance is open for comments [here](#).**

Products from Nodes

Nodes were invited to present their own products during PCG meetings, such as [OceanEyes](#), a citizen science app for the Indian Ocean co-developed by IndOBIS.

OBIS Secretariat Updates

Presented by Ward Appeltans, Head of the OBIS Secretariat

The OBIS Secretariat welcomes Mithona Prak as an administrative support

A new administrative assistant, Mitona Prak, has joined the team on a 50% allocation to the OBIS Secretariat and 50% to the IODE Capacity Development section.

eDNA Expeditions

The eDNA Expeditions site call received an exceptional response, with over 690 applications received. Discussions with the Minderoo Foundation are planned to explore potential scale-up. There will be engagement opportunities for the OBIS Nodes to connect with the 25 selected sites.

OBIS co-led proposal to TRUST Fund Call to projects

The MOZAÏEK proposal, driven by Silas Principe (OBIS Secretariat) was submitted to the Flanders UNESCO Science Trust Fund. It focuses on building modular, analysis-ready biodiversity data packages on top of OBIS, designed to support multiple downstream use cases, with marine heatwaves being the first pilot. If successful, the proposal would fund two full-time positions at the Secretariat, one part-time admin, and one part-time communications position for three years.

OBIS x GBIF

A new tool developed by Pieter Provoost shows, for each OBIS Node, which datasets are also registered and published in GBIF: <https://bit.ly/gbif-registration> The page is updated weekly. Importantly, Ward encouraged OBIS Nodes to publish their datasets to GBIF, noting that OBIS cannot ask GBIF Nodes to publish to OBIS if OBIS is not making the same effort in the other direction.

OBIS and the BBNJ Agreement

Ward Appeltans highlighted OBIS engagement around BBNJ, noting that Nodes may be approached by stakeholders in their countries asking how OBIS and its community can play a role in the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement. An OBIS Google Workspace has been set up with shared folders including BBNJ-related presentations, which Nodes can consult in preparation [here](#).

OBIS and CBD reporting

Victor Chocho (OBIS Ecuador) raised the related issue of CBD national reporting, noting that Ecuador, with support from Peter Provoost, had successfully used OBIS data to report on GBF Target 21. He suggested that other Nodes could help connect their national CBD focal points to OBIS data for the same purpose, and proposed that a reminder or guidance note be circulated. Ward Appeltans confirmed that Ecuador's example could serve as a useful case study and that IODE management would be particularly interested to see member states actively using OBIS in this way.