

# Creative Commons 'non-commercial' licenses impede the re-use of biodiversity information

December 1 2011

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Open access to information about biodiversity is of crucial importance to society, directly affecting areas such as conservation and climate change research and education. "Non-Commercial" restrictions on the reuse of this information are a major barrier to addressing these problems, says a review paper published in the open access journal *ZooKeys*.

Halting the loss of [biodiversity](#) demands that information on organisms, ecosystems, their properties, and their interactions, is easily found and readily available. This requires sharing. Creative Commons (CC) provides a set of licenses to facilitate this. However, Non-Commercial (NC) restrictions are commonly added to Creative Commons licenses, intended to prevent commercial exploitation. The article shows that the ambiguity between "non-for-profit" and "non-commercial" prohibits many legitimate re-uses of NC licensed materials, and imposes significant risks that affect for-profit and not-for-profit organizations alike.

"The concept of 'commercial advantage', the heart of the NC licenses, is very broad and ill defined" says lead author Dr Gregor Hagedorn from the Julius Kühn-Institute in Berlin, Germany. "It potentially excludes all public relation activities that increase the recognition of an organisation and may thus confer commercial advantages later on. Furthermore, the non-open NC licenses are usually incompatible with open Creative Commons licenses, severely restricting the use of NC licensed materials."

The review arose from discussions within an EU funded infrastructure project (ViBRANT) that several authors of the article participate in, on how best to license materials produced within the project. To ensure the widest possible use of biodiversity information, the authors of the ZooKeys publication argue that publicly funded projects should use open CC licenses such as CC BY or CC BY-SA. These are used by most [Open Access](#) publishers, the Wikimedia Foundation projects, and many other open content initiatives.

**More information:** Hagedorn G, Mietchen D, Morris RA, Agosti D, Penev L, Berendsohn WG, Hobern D (2011) Creative Commons licenses and the non-commercial condition: Implications for the re-use of biodiversity information. In: Smith V, Penev L (Eds) e-Infrastructures for data publishing in biodiversity science. *ZooKeys* 150: 127-149. [doi: 10.3897/zookeys.150.2189](https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.150.2189)

Provided by Pensoft Publishers

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