

Career Sheet: Marine Data Expert



Francis Strobbe (Marine Data Expert, Seascope Belgium)

I received my PhD in ecology and evolutionary biology at KU Leuven. After it, I was a postdoctoral research fellow at the Centre for Statistics in Ecology, the Environment and Conservation (SEEC) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI). I worked for more than ten years at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS), where I developed the Belgian Species List website, built on top of an online taxonomic database of species occurring in Belgium. Additionally, I developed the Belgian Bioarchaeological Inventory sub-site, an online instrument to discover Belgian archaeozoological information. At RBINS, I also worked for the Belgian Marine Data Centre, where my work was focused on data standardisation and normalisation, front- and back-end developments and server-side configuration. During my postdoctoral research in South Africa, I created a proof of concept of a biodiversity data analysis pipeline. For Seascope Belgium, I am taking on a senior position at the EMODnet Secretariat as Data and Communication Officer.



OVERVIEW OF THE JOB

For Seascope Belgium, I am Data and Communication Officer at the EMODnet Secretariat. It involves all communication via our website and following up on data and data product releases of the EMODnet thematic groups.



WHAT INSPIRED YOU

I was always interested in both science and technology. On an academic level, I always wanted to become a biologist, while as a hobby I started creating websites for myself when the internet was becoming more and more accessible at home (with low-bandwidth connection). I could test run my first HTML pages on Netscape and Internet Explorer...! Later, I was fascinated by dynamic web pages, which have databases running behind them. While doing my PhD, I started studying web development and this has from then on been a constant in my career path, where the bridge between data and science has always been present.



TYPICAL WORKING DAY

Nowadays, I am teleworking and have set up a separate home office. My days are very typical from 9 to 5, with some exceptions when there are urgent tasks or specific needs that I need to follow up on. Sometimes, my working hours and days can be more flexible, which would involve working later in the evening, while having more time at noon to do outside sports e.g., when the weather is nice!



STUDY & CAREER PATH

HIGHER EDUCATION:

Bachelor Biology (KULAK, Kortrijk, Belgium).

Master Biology (Major subjects: Animal ecology, Morphology and Biodiversity; KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium).

Doctor of Sciences (Major subjects: Aquatic Ecology & Evolution; KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium).

Postdoctoral Fellowship (Field of study: Biodiversity Information and Visualisation; Major subjects: Biodiversity - Statistical modelling – Informatics; University of Cape Town & South African National Biodiversity Institute, South Africa).

OTHER:

PHP jQuery & JS programming;

Database development & design;

Programming in PHP/MySQL;

Web development & Graphical design (Syntra Brussel, Syntra Mechelen).



KEY SKILLS

Professional skills: Content Management, Data Presentation, Database Administration, Software Engineering, Software Management, Web Architecture and Development, User Experience Design, User Interface Design

Personal skills: Team player (Team spirit), 'Can-do' attitude (Motivation), Inventive (Creativity), Versatile (Adaptability), Accuracy (Personal responsibility)



CAREER PROSPECT

I could work in many sectors. Probably more in public and academic sectors, NGO's and start-ups. However, for the private sector, I also have an interesting profile, background and skillset. I could fit in the sectors of *Science*, *Technology* and *Innovation*.



CHALLENGES

The ever-evolving web (application development) landscape, and how to keep up-to-date or even ahead of that, by pioneering.

COORDINATOR

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YOUR ADVICE TO STUDENTS

Never lose your curiosity and look for sectors where you can bridge gaps.



YOUR ADVICE TO TEACHERS AND PARENTS

When students / children show a specific interest in STE(A)M related topics, encourage them to pursue these. That's at least what I always did.



LEARN MORE

Learn more related to this career profile:

<http://www.species.be/>

<http://www.bmdc.be/>

<http://www.seec.uct.ac.za/>

<https://www.sanbi.org/>

<https://www.emodnet.eu/>

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