Colony Functionality in ZIMS

How to record a Colony record.

Contact Species360 Support
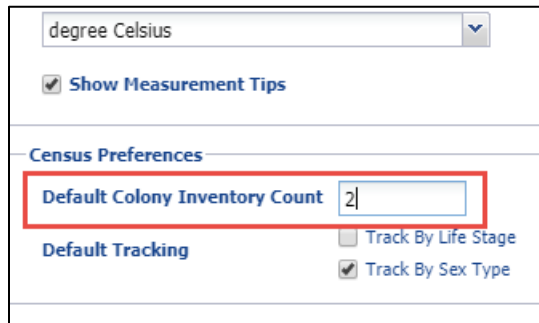
The Colony functionality in ZIMS serves for species that:
- Live in close association with each other, often for mutual benefit (examples: ants and honeybees)
- Live in groups so large it is difficult to count or estimate the number of members (examples: schools of fish and large naked mole rat group)
- Live in compact groups of genetically identical members that can be fragmented (example: corals)

The Colony functionality was designed so that your inventory count would not reflect the count of the members of the colony, which can sometimes be in the tens of thousands. Instead, a colony will count as "1" (or whatever count you choose) in your inventory. By default, this count is "1", and in most cases this count of "1" is considered to be a Best Practice.
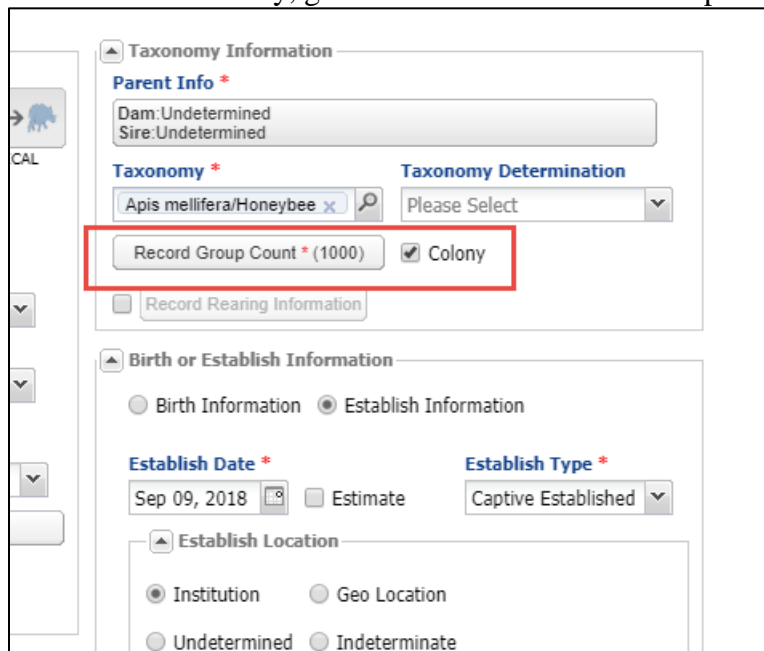
There are two terms that must be understood:
- Colony Inventory Count – This is the count that will display on your Inventory and Taxon Reports and search results as 1 unit (or whatever you recorded for the Colony Inventory Count). You can set the default for this count in Institution Preferences and also change this count within each Colony record. This number will remain regardless of any group splits or merges. Only a Full disposition will bring this number down to zero.
- Group Count – This is an estimated number of members within the Colony. Some Users like to track these estimated numbers as it gives them an idea of the size of the Colony. This number will NOT display in Inventory and Taxon Reports and search results. It can only be changed by recording a Group Census or brought down to zero by recording a Full Disposition Transaction.

The default Colony Inventory Count is the number that will display when you create a new Colony, but it can be edited during the accession. To change the default count, go to Institution > Institution Preferences > Measurement and Census Preferences. At the bottom is Census Preferences.
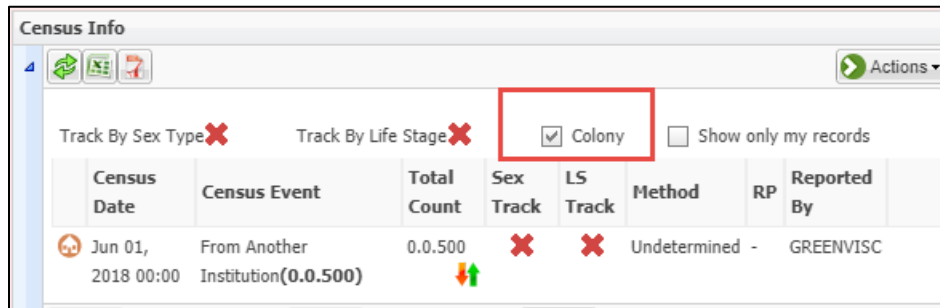
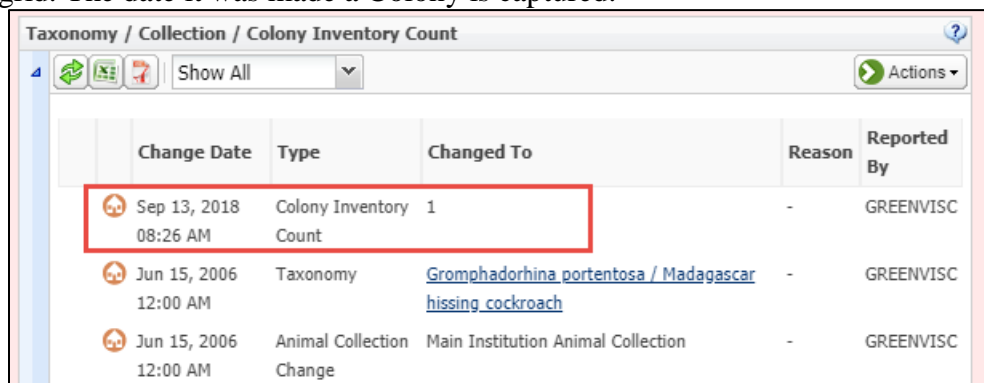To accession a colony, go to Start > Accession > Group of Animals > select Transaction Mode.

You will need to record a Group Count of the members of the colony. This can be an estimate of the total numbers, or, you can simply record your count of "1" (or whatever your Colony Inventory Count was). This number will display in your census grid and in My Transactions, but your Inventory and Taxon Reports and search results will display your chosen Colony Inventory Count. Then check the Colony checkbox.
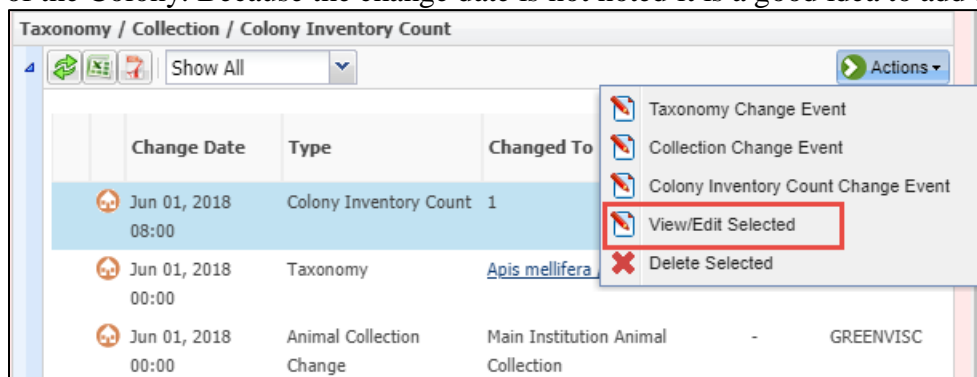
If you have already accessioned a group that you now wish to manage as a colony, open the Census Info grid and check the Colony checkbox.

This will activate the Colony Inventory Count in the Taxonomy / Collection / Colony Inventory Count grid. The date it was made a Colony is captured.

If you want to change the Colony Inventory Count for this one record for the entire history of the colony, highlight the Colony Inventory Count and select View/Edit Selected from the Actions menu. Record the desired count and Save. This will change the Inventory Colony Count for the entire history of the Colony. Because the change date is not noted it is a good idea to add a Note to capture that date.

If you want to change the Colony Inventory Count for one record for a part of the colony history, select the Colony Inventory Count Change Event from the Actions menu.

Instead of simply changing the count, this approach retains the original count and adds the new one. There is no need to add an additional Note because the change date is captured.

If you want to record an updated estimated Group Count of the members in the colony you can do so in the Census Info grid by selecting Add New from the Actions menu. This number will not be reflected in your inventory, that will remain the count you entered for Colony Inventory. The Group Count will update in the My Transactions grid. This number will not be updated when Partial Transactions are entered because it is a colony.

Part of the design of colonies in ZIMS is that the Colony Inventory Count will never get down to zero if a Partial Disposition is used. This allows you to split your honeybee colony into two or take a coral fragment from the origin coral. The Colony checkbox is available in the Split a Group allowing you to split an actual group out of a Colony or split another Colony out of a Colony.

Below we generated a fragment from our staghorn coral colony.

The Colony Inventory Count of "1" remains, even though we did a Partial Disposition of "1" to generate the fragment.

Some things to note:
- If you split a colony out of a colony the count in My Transactions and Census count will NOT change
- If you split a group out of a colony the count in My Transactions and Census count will NOT change
- The only way that you can change the member count of a colony is to record a new census or a Full Disposition Transaction
- If you split a colony out of a colony you must still record a Group Count, even if it is the same as your Colony Inventory Count

The Detailed Inventory Report has a line for your colony count.

Gromphadorhina portentosa							Madagascar hissing cockroach
Owned And Onsite	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.0	0	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.0
Groups *	0.0.29	0.0.0	0.0.5		0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.34
Colonies	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.0		0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.0
Carausius morosus							Walkingstick
Owned And Onsite	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.0	0	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.0
Groups *	0.0.113	0.0.0	0.0.0		0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.113
Colonies	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.0		0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.0
Apis mellifera							Honeybee
Owned And Onsite	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.0	0	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.0
Groups *	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.0		0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.0
Colonies	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.1		0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.1

The Summary Inventory simply notes when colonies are included in the row.

Latrodectus mactans	Black widow spider	0.3.0	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.1.0	0.0.0	0.2.0
Gromphadorhina portentosa *	Madagascar hissing cockroach	0.0.29	0.0.0	0.0.5	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.34
Carausius morosus *	Walkingstick	0.0.113	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.113
Apis mellifera +	Honeybee	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.1	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.1
Archispirostreptus *	Giant African millipede	0.0.11	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.11
Archispirostreptus gigas *	Giant African millipede	0.0.17	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.0	0.0.17
TOTAL		0.6.183	0.0.0	0.0.6	0.1.1	0.0.0	0.5.188

* = Group Inventory Counts Included In Row
** = Colony counts included in Row
+ = Both Group and Colony counts included in Row

More help on Colony/Groups:
Colony Inventory Count Vs Group Count
Group Help Topics

Revised 16 April 2019