



Encyclopedia of Life

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For immediate release, Friday, May 21, 2010

EOL officials are available for interviews

Safeguarding Species Knowledge

May 21, 2010 - Washington, DC - The United Nations has declared May 22 the [International Day for Biological Diversity](#) to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. This year, May 22 takes on special significance because 2010 is the [International Year of Biodiversity](#), and people all over the world are working to safeguard Earth's precious and increasingly threatened biodiversity.

Biodiversity loss impacts human well-being, threatens food and energy security, increases vulnerability to natural disasters, restricts access to clean water and raw materials. It also affects public health, social relations, and the world economy.

The Encyclopedia of Life (EOL) is a global effort to assemble information on all living species known to science into one ever-expanding, trusted, web-based resource. EOL is bringing humanity's knowledge about biodiversity together in order to expand our understanding of the species around us.

In celebration of 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity and May 22 as the International Day for Biological Diversity, EOL is:

- Sponsoring seventeen early-career scientists through the [EOL Rubenstein Fellows Program](#). These individuals from around the world are working with their colleagues to assemble information on species ranging from spiders in India to trees in Cameroon. This information will be available on eol.org for anybody to use and share.
- Forging new [partnerships](#) with dozens of international organizations from Tibet to Australia to share species information.
- Providing free, innovative [tools](#) for creating, editing, and publishing web pages of species information which can appear on EOL.
- Linking to more than half a million pages of scanned biodiversity literature through the [Biodiversity Heritage Library](#).
- Sharing [resources for BioBlitzes](#), a special type of field study in which a group of scientists and volunteers conduct an intensive biological inventory of a specified area in an attempt to identify and record all species living there.

Awareness of Earth's biodiversity covers only a small percentage of all living organisms. As EOL Steering Committee Chairman James Hanken, director of the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology, explains, "With so many species still unstudied and going extinct before their roles and relationships with other organisms are understood, there has never been a stronger need for a resource like the Encyclopedia of Life." Hanken notes, "By increasing our knowledge and appreciation of the immense variety of life and the relationships that exist between them, we seek to inspire new generations of scientists and stewards of the environment."

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About the Encyclopedia of Life: Encyclopedia of Life is an unprecedented effort that brings together several of the world's leading science institutions—Harvard University, the Field Museum of Natural History, the Marine Biological Laboratory, the Smithsonian Institution, the Biodiversity Heritage Library, and the Missouri Botanical Garden—all with the common goal to transform the science of biology and our understanding of life on Earth. It provides freely accessible information for users around the world about all of the 1.9 million known species on our planet. Please visit www.eol.org for more information.