

The first part of The " "Encyclopedia of Life" " Has Now Been Released

The first release of the Encyclopedia of Life portal, which contains 30,000 species and eventually aims to document all species of life on Earth, is available on the web site www.eol.org. Every species on the site has its own page containing images and relevant facts. The aim is for the number of species documented to reach 1.8 million by 2017.[1]

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In preparing the portal, use was made of online databases that had already been developed and contained information concerning a great many life forms. Dr. James Edwards, the executive director of the Encyclopedia of Life, states that they used a technology to pool data from different sources and present them within their portal. "If someone were to sit down and start writing, from scratch, an encyclopedia of life, it would take them about 100 years to complete. But we think we'll be able to do it in one-tenth of that time," says Edward. (2)

The Encyclopedia of Life portal contains information as to whether a particular species is extinct or not, and whether or not it is endangered.

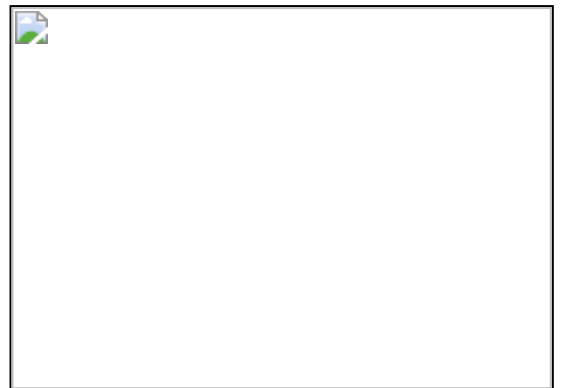
The Encyclopedia of Life project is of great interest as representing the latest stage in documentation research undertaken by a large number of scientists from different countries. It is also a reminder of the amazing wealth in the variety of life created by Allah.

There is certainly an extraordinary biodiversity on Earth. Very different habitats, from deserts to rain forests, from mountain tops to the depths of the oceans, play host to millions of life forms with completely different physical forms. A single tree in the rain forests, where the greatest concentration of different living species is found, may contain 43 separate species of ant and a total of 650 different species of insect. Each of these species plays a key role in a much wider system. An article about the Amazon rain forests in the Turkish scientific journal *Bilim ve Teknik* describes the interdependence of living species and the sensitive nature of the ecological system concerned:

The survival of species in this complex ecosystem in the Amazon Basin is closely linked to the survival of all. Be they plant or animal, each species contributes to a small part of this system with its million components. Trees, the epiphytes [plants that grow on other plants] and fungi on the trees, apes, vampire bats, eagles, parrots, crocodiles, piranha fish and lilies in the river, and invisible micro-organisms all make their own different contribution to this giant ecosystem. We are looking at extraordinarily delicate balances here. The rain forest consists of an amalgamation of all these species. The disappearance of any single species will damage several balances. (3)

On the other hand, these life forms are of vital importance to human beings in a number of different ways. Although around 80% of our food supply is based on a mere 20 kinds of plants, people around the world still make use of at least 40,000 plant and animal species a day. (4) Many human beings are dependent on these species for food, shelter and clothing. Many drugs are also derived, directly or indirectly, from biological sources. Living things provide ready-made pharmaceutical compounds that modern technology is unable to synthesize in even the most advanced laboratories. The range of uses of life forms, most of whom we have never heard of, in the medical and pharmaceutical industry, is rising day by day. "Taxol," for instance, which is employed against breast and ovarian cancer, is obtained from the bark of the North American yew tree. "Squalamine," which prevents the development of cancer, is derived from the liver of a species of shark; "digitalis," which acts as a support for people with heart failure, is obtained from foxglove. Vinblastine and vincristine, two chemical substances used in the treatment of Hodgkin's disease and leukemia in children are obtained from the Algerian violet. A clotting agent in the horseshoe crab found in North America and the West Indies is capable of identifying potentially fatal bacteria in vaccines, pills or medical equipment. Antibiotics used against microbes are generally obtained from bacteria and fungal moulds. Some 3,000 species of plant are used in the field of birth control alone. In addition, bacteria, birds, monkeys, rats, cats, dogs, rabbits, insects and many other life forms are used in testing new drugs and vaccines and in medical research.

Biodiversity confers important benefits on human life also through the resources it provides in the industrial field. Many products are biological in origin, from construction materials to cotton thread, from dyes to chewing gum, and from rubber to glue. In the same way they represent major resources in industry, living things also constitute models for scientists. Biodiversity is such an important



guide in that respect that it has given birth to a new science, biomimetics, that is based on the principle of solving problems encountered in industry by inspiration from living things in nature. The following examples of marvels of creation show how living things are a focus of inspiration for scientists looking for ways of improving human life:

- Hummingbirds' ability to cross the Gulf of Mexico on less than 3 grams of fuel,
- How dragonflies are more maneuverable than even the best helicopters,
- The heating and air conditioning systems in termite mounds—in terms of equipment and energy consumption, far superior to those constructed by man,
- Bats' high-frequency transmitter, far more efficient and sensitive than radar systems created by human beings,
- How light-emitting algae combine different chemical substances to give off light without heat,
- How arctic fish and temperate-zone frogs return to life after being frozen, with the ice doing their organs no harm,
- How anole lizards and chameleons change their colors—and how octopi and cuttlefish change both their colors and patterns in a moment—to blend in with their surroundings,
- Bees', turtles' and birds' ability to navigate without maps,
- Whales and penguins diving underwater for long periods without scuba gear,
- How the DNA helix stores information in all living things,
- How, through photosynthesis, leaves perform an astounding chemical reaction to create 300 billion tons of sugar every year... (5)

The millions of life forms being documented under the Encyclopedia of Life project are all manifestations of Allah's infinite might and mercy, in terms of both the sublime creation they reveal and the many benefits their diversity bestows upon human beings. While science reveals the perfection in Allah's creation, evolutionists are unable to show one single intermediate form that has ever existed among such a vast number of different life forms. Evolutionists irrationally maintain that such a perfect chain of marvels developed spontaneously through unconscious processes, but now also openly admit that Darwin's theory cannot account for the origin of species. (6) Recent discoveries in molecular biology have revealed that the complexity of life is far greater than had previously been estimated. They have added to the quandaries facing evolutionists on all sides, and the irreducibly complex structures in living things have become insoluble dilemmas for evolutionists, who regard chance as a deity. Living things did not evolve; and each one of the species classified by scientists came into being through Allah's will and by His commanding them to "Be!" Almighty Allah is He Who creates what He desires:

"Praise be to Allah, the Bringer into Being of the heavens and earth, He Who made the angels messengers, with wings – two, three or four. He adds to creation in any way He wills. Allah has power over all things."
(Surah Fatir, 1)

The characteristics of living things that are of service to human beings are a sign of Allah's infinite mercy:

"There is instruction for you in cattle. From the contents of their bellies, from between the dung and blood, We give you pure milk to drink, easy for drinkers to swallow." (Surat an-Nahl, 66)

(1) It is estimated that the species living today are only 1 percent of all the species that have ever lived in natural history.

(2) Paul Rincon, "First look at vast 'book of life'," 26 February 2008,

(3) Caglar Sunay, *Bilim ve Teknik*, April 1999, p. 75

(4) "Biodiversity", en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biodiversity

(5) Harun Yahya, *Biomimetics: Technology Imitates Nature*, www.harunyahya.com/books/science/biomimetics/biomimetics_intro.php

(6) www.darwinismrefuted.com/

<https://www.harunyahya.info/en/articles/the-first-part-of-the-encyclopedia-of-life-has-now-been-released>