

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF LIFE EOLETTER

WELCOME

Courtesy of John Tann, Urissa, Bettman



The EOL team has been busy updating our site, testing new software, and bringing in new species page content from our users. This issue is full of exciting news; we hope you enjoy it.

Please get in touch with questions or comments. [We love to hear from you.](#)

IN THIS ISSUE

- ▶ Welcome
- ▶ Quarterly Quote
 - Great Outdoors
- ▶ Media Spotlight
 - EOL in Costa Rica
- ▶ Fresh Tech
 - Add your two cents, er, comments
 - Your Lens, Your EOL
- ▶ Content Partners
 - Introducing LifeDesk
 - EOL Fellows – Version 1.0
- ▶ Scientist Series
 - Drs. Donald Pfister and Anne Pringle
- ▶ Did You Know?

QUARTERLY QUOTE

See what scientists, experts, and the public are saying about EOL

Great Outdoors

Discover the diversity of life first hand

Grab your backpack and join the National Geographic Society, the National Park Service, and EOL at the [Indiana Dunes BioBlitz](#), a 24-hour event from May 15 to May 16, noon to noon, where groups of scientists, naturalists, students and the public will team up to discover and inventory every living plant and creature in one of the United States' most biodiverse national parks.

Part scientific endeavor, part festival and part outdoor classroom, BioBlitz organizers hope to help increase awareness of the diverse species present in our own parks to better understand how to protect the natural environment in the future. After the information is collected and organized, it will be uploaded to EOL species pages where users around the world will be able to see what lives in Indiana Dunes.

"I find the idea of categorizing and representing biodiversity in a high quality, comprehensive and exciting Website, like EOL, incredible," says John Francis, Vice President of Research, Conservation, and Exploration at the National Geographic Society. "**Presenting accurate biodiversity information to citizen scientists is essential, and I believe together we are planting seeds for the next generation of taxonomists.**"



Courtesy of National Park Service
M. Woodbridge Williams

The gorgeous setting for the upcoming BioBlitz. Sand dunes at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, Lake Michigan, Indiana.



CONTENT PARTNERS Get a closer look at the collaborations that help share biodiversity information with the world

LifeDesk Makes Its Debut

[LifeDesk](#), now in beta testing by the taxonomic community, is a customizable and collaborative web environment that makes sharing and managing biodiversity data easier than ever. Through it, LifeDesk owners and their community can also shape EOL by contributing information on any of the 1.8 million known species.

Each LifeDesk is an independent website with its own database and classification with numerous ways to export content. In the future, EOL LifeDesks will be made available for citizen scientists to use and we are collecting feedback on what tools will be important to meet their needs. Right now there are more than two dozen active LifeDesks and owners are providing valuable feedback. Early standouts include the [MetalMark moths \(Choreutidae\)](#) and the [ELEO Pinacate Beetle project](#). At the moment, we're working hard to improve the user interface for LifeDesk participants. Our next major step is to ensure that when we expand LifeDesk by opening it up to more users, all the tools are top quality and easy to use.

e-Biosphere 09

1-3 June 2009 • London-UK

EOL is co-hosting e-Biosphere 09—an international conference focused on biodiversity informatics (a research field that creates unprecedented global access to data on millions of species and their role in nature). The conference will bring together an array of scientists, researchers, policy makers, and representatives from funding agencies to talk about the current state of biodiversity informatics and to determine its next steps. Learn more about the [conference](#) and [reserve your space today](#).

EOL Fellows – Version 1.0

What do wildflowers of Tibet, dragonflies, metalmark moths, amphibians of Panama, dung beetles, ghost shrimp, and ribbon worms have in common? In a new program, eight EOL Fellows have been chosen to receive partial salary support for up to a year. They will work closely with mentors to assemble and curate species pages for this diverse cross-section of biodiversity. Fellows will share information from their own research and catalyze contributions by many others in their scientific communities. Many Fellows will test the new LifeDesk contribution tool. By supplementing research grants, EOL is helping promising scientists learn new ways to spread their knowledge.

The program is being piloted at the Smithsonian and will soon be open to individuals and mentors around the world. A generous gift by David M. Rubenstein provides funding for at least 60 more fellows in the next four years. The next deadline for applications will be in Fall 2009.

For more information on the program go to [EOL.org](#).



FRESH TECH New website features and content

Add your two cents, er, comments



Now you can add your two cents by commenting on the Encyclopedia of Life's Web site, among its many other new user-friendly features. All species pictures and pages can now include your input! If you find something particularly interesting, say so.

To add comments to a species page or any text description or image, simply register (it's free) with the site and look for the comments icon next to images and descriptions in the new "species comments" tab in the media panel. If you know more about a topic, share your thoughts. This feature is all about you.

With an EOL account, you can also tag any image you want, and then search for your tags later to find the images and their related species. Once an image has been tagged in the same way by several different people, the tag is "promoted" to a public tag and is visible and searchable by anyone.

Just become a member of EOL and the power is yours. Don't have the time? Don't worry. If you have a Yahoo, Flickr, or AOL user account, use it to sign in. You're all set. No additional usernames or passwords are required.

Your Lens, Your EOL



Courtesy of Phil Myers
As you already know, you can add your biodiversity photos to the EOL Flickr group. Now we are also accepting videos of plants, animals and microorganisms through Flickr. Visit the [Honeybee \(*Apis mellifera*\)](#) page to see some recent video additions by Arthur Chapman and Valter Jacinto.

Once your photos and videos are uploaded and tagged appropriately in Flickr, they are transferred to EOL species pages. In the last six months, EOL Flickr members have added 13,000 photos and over 200 videos.

You can see some of your fellow enthusiasts' work by visiting a species page and adjusting the slider on the left hand side of the screen to "all." You'll notice that we have a new color-coded system that differentiates verified images from those that are yet to be checked.

While we don't have space to highlight all of the new features, you can read about them in full detail [on the site](#).

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT



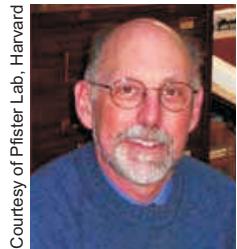
Costa Rica Loves EOL

Two of the nation's leading news outlets ran stories in February highlighting the EOL Steering Committee's meeting at [INBio](#), the country's national biodiversity institute. INBio is hoping to start a regional EOL for Central America, focusing on local flora and fauna.

- La Nación: '[Enciclopedia de la vida' se alió al INBio para inventariar especies](#)
- El Financiero: [Enciclopedia de la Vida se reúne en el InBio](#)



SCIENTIST SERIES Meet the scientists and experts who are working with EOL



Dr. Pfister

Drs. Donald Pfister and Anne Pringle

EOL is tapping into the power of youth by joining those who engage young minds to address the monumental task of creating content for more than a million species pages.

Drs. Donald Pfister and Anne Pringle are professors in the Department of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology at Harvard University, and are delighted to help the greater public learn about fungal science.

They are participating in an EOL pilot program involving four U.S. universities that gives students the opportunity to write fungal species pages for EOL as part of their curriculum. The [Mushroom Observer](#) site (one of EOL's content partners) created the template for students to input information on their selected fungi. Once reviewed by the participating professors, student contributions were then uploaded to the Mushroom Observer site, and now are being shown on EOL. The first version of the program, piloted at University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, University of California-Berkeley, Oregon State University and Harvard University, has been a hit, Pfister proclaims.

"This is a wonderful way to engage students in what they consider to be a worthwhile and significant project," Pfister describes. "They all felt they were doing something important, not just busy work." The learning will last a lifetime, the Harvard professor assures us.

EOL is thrilled to receive student contributions. In addition to this current initiative, undergraduate students have been contributing species information for publication on EOL content partner sites [AmphibiaWeb](#) and [Animal Diversity Web](#). This information can now be found on EOL, bringing even wider visibility to the efforts of these young authors.

"I'm especially happy that this is a kind of work that fascinates students who don't want a career in biology. As these students move on to professions in public policy, or education they will carry a memory of the creative process of science with them, and become part of a more educated public," notes Pringle.

- Check it out: The [Glistening Ink-cap page](#) created by Professor Tom Volk and his student Melinda Mundt of University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse.
- For more information about this pilot project, please contact education@eol.org.



Dr. Pringle

Courtesy of Richard Harris

DID YOU KNOW?



Emperor penguin

Scientists are unsure of how Emperor penguins perceive their prey. They dive as far as 450 meters underwater in pursuit of a meal, depths at which there is little to no light. These penguins are highly social and in severe weather they huddle together to escape wind and conserve warmth.

[more...](#)


Shy Toby

Canthigaster ocellicincta, a coral reef fish, is called Shy Toby because of its secretive behavior and tendency to move fleetingly from one hole in the reef to another. These fish are usually found alone or in pairs.

[more...](#)


Tokay Gecko

When threatened, the Tokay Gecko can cast off its tail in defense. The part of the tail that is cast off moves violently for several minutes until it slows down and stops, thus giving the gecko fair time to escape.

[more...](#)


Bracken

Bracken is a well-known deciduous fern that lives on nearly every continent. Humans have long eaten the fiddleheads (young leaves) of bracken, but over-ingestion of fresh or dried fronds has been linked to stomach and esophageal cancers.

[more...](#)