**Nature**, in the broadest sense, is equivalent to the **natural world**, **physical world**, or **material world**. "Nature" refers to the [phenomena](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phenomenon" \o "Phenomenon)of the physical world, and also to [life](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life) in general. It ranges in scale from the [subatomic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subatomic) to the [cosmic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universe).

The word *nature* is derived from the [Latin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin) word *natura*, or "essential qualities, innate disposition", and in ancient times, literally meant "birth".[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nature#cite_note-etymonline-nature-0) *Natura* was a Latin translation of the Greek word *[physis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physis" \o "Physis)* (φύσις), which originally related to the intrinsic characteristics that plants, animals, and other features of the world develop of their own accord.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nature#cite_note-1)[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nature#cite_note-2) The concept of nature as a whole, the physical [universe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universe), is one of several expansions of the original notion; it began with certain core applications of the word φύσις by [pre-Socratic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-Socratic_philosophy) philosophers, and has steadily gained currency ever since. This usage was confirmed during the advent of modern [scientific method](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientific_method) in the last several centuries.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nature#cite_note-3)[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nature#cite_note-4)

Within the various uses of the word today, "nature" often refers to [geology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geology) and [wildlife](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wildlife). Nature may refer to the general realm of various types of living plants and animals, and in some cases to the processes associated with inanimate objects – the way that particular types of things exist and change of their own accord, such as the [weather](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather) and [geology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geology) of the Earth, and the [matter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matter) and [energy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Energy) of which all these things are composed. It is often taken to mean the "[natural environment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_environment)" or [wilderness](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilderness)–wild animals, rocks, forest, beaches, and in general those things that have not been substantially altered by human intervention, or which persist despite human intervention. For example, manufactured objects and human interaction generally are not considered part of nature, unless qualified as, for example, "human nature" or "the whole of nature". This more traditional concept of natural things which can still be found today implies a distinction between the natural and the artificial, with the artificial being understood as that which has been brought into being by a human[consciousness](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consciousness) or a human [mind](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind). Depending on the particular context, the term "natural" might also be distinguished from the [unnatural](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/unnatural), the [supernatural](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supernatural), or [synthetic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artifact_(archaeology)).

