**D I V E R S I T Y**

The living world is a rich tapestry of diversity, teeming with different kinds of organisms. There is a wide diversity in the flora (plants) and fauna (animals) in the world. Many different habitats exist on the earth. Each habitat has a variety of organisms that live there in different ways. This variety of life is called DIVERSITY.

There are approximately 1.5 million species that exist today *(5% are single-celled organisms; 22% are fungi and plants; 70% are animals).* By far the largest numbers of species are the land dwelling insects. With such a wide range of animals and plants in the planet, also explains diversity.

Organisms may have similar adaptations because they are related to each other e.g. all plants have cell walls and almost all plants have chlorophyll to capture energy from sunlight. All birds have wings and use beaks to get food. All fishes have gills and fins. Organisms that are related to each other may have similar structures even though the structures are used differently.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF LIVING THINGS**

*What makes something “alive”? What characteristics do define life?*

In its broadest sense, biology is the study of living things – the science of life. There are some generally accepted characteristics that are common to all living things, these include:- *(Remember* ***MR NIGER CAD? – Movement, Respiration, Nutrition, Irritability, Growth, Excretion, Reproduction, Competition, Adaptation and Death.)***

**For the purposes of this class, we will collapse and merge some of these to five points as :-**

1. All **living things are made of one or more cells**. A cell is the basic unit of a living thing. Most can perform all processes associated with life. A cell provides all the conditions needed for the chemical reactions of living things. Cells vary in type and function. Life is highly organized from small and simple to large and complex, within cells, within multicellular organisms and among organisms. Here is a hierarchical organization of living things:

**Within Cells Within Multicellular Organisms Among Organisms**

Cell Organism e.g. Bird Ecosystem

Organelle Organ System e.g. N. S. Community

Macromolecule Organ e.g. brain Species

Molecule Tissue Population

1. **Responding to their environment** – all organisms respond to stimuli. Plants grow toward a source of light, and your pupils dilate when you walk into a dark room. Multicellular animals have specialized sense organs and effector organs. Unicellular organisms also with no Nervous System, the reception and response to a stimulus occur in the same cell. Sound is a stimulus. Other stimuli include light, pressure, odors and temperature changes.
2. **Growth, Development and Reproduction** – all organisms are capable of growing (through cell division and cell enlargement) and reproducing new individuals more or less similar in form to the parent organisms by means of sexual or asexual reproduction. These organisms possess hereditary molecules that are passed to their offspring ensuring that the offspring are of the same species.
3. **Regulation** – all organisms need energy to build the substances that make up their cells. All organisms have regulatory mechanisms that coordinate the organisms’ internal functions. These functions include supplying cells with nutrients, transporting substance through the organism and removing wastes. For life to be maintained, a balance must exist between an organism’s energy-producing processes and its energy-using processes. The constant balancing of these two systems within an organism is called **metabolism.***(Nutrition and Excretion)*
4. **Homeostasis –** all organisms maintain relatively constant internal conditions different from their environment, a process called **homeostasis.** This is the regulation by an organism of the chemical composition of its body fluids and other aspects of its internal environment so that physiological processes can proceed at optimum rates e.g. **homoiothermy**– acid-base balance and **poikilothermy** – body temperature.

**CLASSIFICATION OF ORGANISMS**

Living things were initially categorized only into two kingdoms of Animalia and Plantae. A **Kingdom** in the traditional classification systems is the highest category into which organisms are classified. These organisms live in the habitats of land, water and air.

Organisms were classified by defining what makes them similar and different. Classification also helps scientists trace the process of evolution and extinction of organisms.

KINGDOMS

The original two kingdoms, Plantae and Animalia have been supplemented by others. As biologists discovered microorganisms and learned more about other organisms, more kingdoms were added. Most modern classification systems recognize five kingdoms which are: **Monera** (bacteria or prokaryotae)**, Protoctista** (protozoa and algae)**, t**he multicellular organisms were split into three kingdoms of **Plantae**, **Fungi** (molds, yeasts), **Animalia** (invertebrates and vertebrates).

**THE FIVE KINGDOMS**

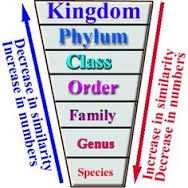
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| --- |
| Kingdoms are a way that scientists have developed to divide all living things. These divisions are based on what living things have in common and how they differ. This system was developed over 2, 000 years ago and has changed drastically over the years. Currently there are five kingdoms in which all living things are divided: Monera Kingdom, Protist Kingdom, Fungi Kingdom, Plant Kingdom, and Animal Kingdom.  **Monera Kingdom** The Monera Kingdom consists of organisms that are made up of one cell. These organisms are called unicellular. These unicellular organisms are made of a very simple cell that often lacks many cell parts, such as a nucleus, that are commonly found in other cells. Bacteria are a type of monera.  **Protist Kingdom** Protists are similar to monera in that they are unicellular. Protists are a bit more complex because they contain a nucleus. They also have moving parts and can move around within their environment.  **Fungi Kingdom** Fungi have their own kingdom because there is no other organism like them. They were once thought to be plants but they differ from plants in one major way. Fungi cannot make their own food. Mushrooms are a type of fungi.  **Plant Kingdom** All plants are a part of the Plant Kingdom. Plants include trees, grass, flowers, and algae. They all share the common characteristic of being able to make their own food using water and sunlight. Because they only require a few simple requirements, plants can grow almost anywhere.   **Animal Kingdom** Organisms in the Animal Kingdom are multicellular and rely on other organisms for food. This kingdom is by far the largest of all the kingdoms. The animals of the Animal Kingdom can be found all over the world and can be any size from very tiny to extremely big. |

**LEVELS OF CLASSIFICATION**

**Carolus Linnaeus (1707 – 1778)** classified all the different kinds of organisms into groups based on similar characteristics. Linnaeus’s system for naming species is called **binomial nomenclature (scientific name)**. Each species has a Latinized name composed of two words (hence binomial) printed in italics (or underlined if handwritten or typed). The first word names the **genus**, which is capitalized; the second word is the **species,** which is peculiar to the species within the genus and is written in lower-case. E.g. *Glossina palpalis* (Tsetse fly).

Taxonomy is the science of classifying living things. A group of organisms at a particular level in a classification system is called a **taxon (**plural, **taxa).**

There are seven major levels of classification. Each successive level contains fewer organisms with more characteristics in common than the level above it. These levels are, from the largest, **kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus** and **species. (D**oes **K**im **P**lay **C**hess **O**r **F**ix **G**reat **S**andwiches? Or **K**indly **P**ay **C**ash **O**r **F**urnish **G**ood **S**ecurity.)



**DOMAINS**

Biologists are increasingly adopting a classification of living organisms that recognizes three **domains**, a taxonomic level higher than kingdom. These are **bacteria** containing the true bacteria, **archaea** (archaebacteria) and **Eukarya** (eukaryotes).

**BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF THE DOMAINS**

**DOMAIN 1: ARCHAEA**

These are the "bacteria" that live at high temperatures or produce methane. While most archaeans look similar to bacteria under the microscope, the extreme conditions under which many species live has made them difficult to culture.

Archaeans include inhabitants of some of the most extreme environments on the planet. Some live near rift vents in the deep sea at temperatures well over 100 degrees Centigrade. Others live in hot springs, or in extremely alkaline or acid waters. They have been found thriving inside the digestive tracts of cows, termites, and marine life where they produce methane. They live in the anoxic muds of marshes and at the bottom of the ocean, and even thrive in petroleum deposits deep underground. Some archaeans can survive the desiccating effects of extremely saline waters. One salt-loving group of archaea includes *Halobacterium.*

The archaeans can also be called “life extremists” because they live in some of the most extreme environments on earth. Their cell walls lack peptidoglycan and the lipids in their cell membranes are branched.

Examples of Archaea are:

1. **Methanogens** – these obtain their energy by using hydrogen gas (H2) to reduce carbon dioxide (CO*2)* to methane gas (CH4). They are also strict anaerobes. Live in swamps, marshes and the intestines of mammals.
2. **Extremophiles** – are able to grow under conditions that seem extreme to us e.g.:
   1. **Thermophiles** – live in very hot places, typically from 60o to 80oC. Many of them are autotrophs and have metabolisms based on sulfur. For example, *Pyrolobus fumarii* is so heat tolerant that it is not killed by a one-hour treatment in an autoclave.
   2. **Halophiles** – These are salt lovers. They live in very salty places like the Dead Sea. These bacteria require water with a salinity of 15 to 20% compared to 3% salinity of sea water.
   3. **pH-tolerant** archaea grow in highly acidic (pH = 0.7) and very basic (pH = 11) environments.
   4. **Pressure-tolerant**– archaea have also been isolated requiring at least 300 atmospheres of pressure to survive.

**DOMAIN 2: BACTERIA**

Bacteria are often accused as the cause of human and animal disease (e. g., *Leptospira*, which causes serious disease in livestock). However, certain bacteria, the actinomycetes, produce antibiotics such as streptomycin; others live symbiotically in the guts of animals (including humans) or elsewhere in their bodies, or on the roots of certain plants, converting nitrogen into a usable form. Bacteria put the tang in yogurt; bacteria help to break down dead organic matter; bacteria make up the base of the food web in many environments. Bacteria are of such immense importance because of their extreme flexibility, capacity for rapid growth and reproduction.

**DOMAIN 3: EUKARYA (EUKARYOTES)**

The Eukaryotes include the organisms that most people are most familiar with - all animals, plants, fungi, and protists. Although they show unbelievable diversity in form, they share fundamental characteristics of cellular organization (have nuclei, mitochondria, and other organelles), biochemistry, and molecular biology. Examples are: a dinoflagellate, a single-celled photosynthetic protist; a palm tree representing the plants; a spider, one of the animals; and a cluster of mushrooms representing the fungi.

Some key characteristics of Eukaryotes are:-

1. Multicellularity – distinct types of cells, tissues and organs can be differentiated within the complex bodies of multicellular organisms. A multicellular organism can do many things according to the different cells.
2. Sexuality – this alternates between **syngamy** – the union of male and female gametes producing a cell with two sets of chromosomes; and **meiosis**, cell division producing daughter cells with one set of chromosomes.