

# Biodiversity or diversity of life

What is it, why is it important and why do you need to protect it?

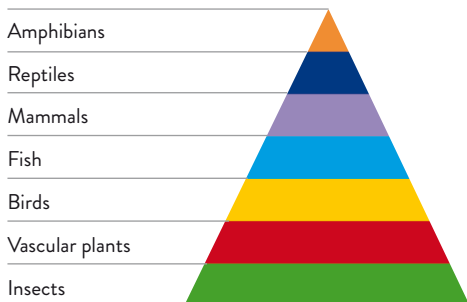


Photo: Ann-Katrine Garn Blom

## WHAT IS BIODIVERSITY?

Biodiversity, or biological diversity, refers to the variety of life on Earth and all of its manifestations. It is the variety within and between the millions of different species of plants, animals, fungi, algae and micro-organisms and the ecosystems in which they live and interact with.

## NUMBER OF SPECIES IN EUROPE



## WHAT DOES BIODIVERSITY DO FOR US?

Planet Earth is made up of a huge range of different landscapes, from deep ocean trenches to towering mountains. In almost all of these places, you'll find animals and plants that have adapted to live there. Each species has adapted to perform a function within its community, called an ecosystem. A healthy ecosystem provides benefits to humans, the so called "ecosystem services". They not only make human life possible but contribute to humans' quality of life. Key services provided by ecosystems are climate regulation, pests control, water and air purification, flood and erosion prevention, crop pollination, fiber and fuel provision, etc. Biodiversity plays a role in most of them.

*Examples of the role of biodiversity in ecosystem services: plants store carbon, release oxygen and prevent soil erosion; insects are pollinators; genetic diverse crops buffer pests and climate changes, etc.*

## WHY DOES BIODIVERSITY NEED TO BE PROTECTED?

Human well-being and life quality rely on nature, but some human activities such as land use, industrial activities, or invasive species introduction could threaten natural ecosystems and biodiversity. Losing species, and with them biodiversity, can have knock-on effects that we can't predict.

*In China in the 1950s, people believed that common house-sparrows were eating so much grain that they were damaging agriculture as a whole. They scared sparrows away by making so much noise that the birds would not be able to land. Indeed, many millions eventually dropped dead from exhaustion but the result wasn't quite what everyone had expected: it turned out that sparrows had been eating the grain but once they had gone, populations of insects exploded – and insects were far more destructive to the crops. The sparrows were no longer there to eat them and the ecosystem collapsed.*

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Biodiversity is diminishing rapidly all around the world. This loss is affecting you as well as many others and it even happens in your community. That's why EAZA, BGCI and Ecsite are running the Let It Grow campaign. Different institutions – zoos, aquariums, botanic gardens, science centers and museums – will be launching Let it Grow activities aimed at helping you and your community to set aside a dedicated space to encourage nature to recover.

## JOIN THE CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES!

To find out more and to get involved with helping nature in your area, please visit [www.letitgrow.eu](http://www.letitgrow.eu), get in touch with your local institution and...Let It Grow!



Photo: Max Blake





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