

Exploration Connection:

Major groupings

Scientists use a biological classification system to organize and compare organisms. This recognized system allows scientists from all over the world to communicate their research and discoveries.

Plants

Plants produce their own food by using energy from the Sun. Plants are important to almost all other organisms because they produce the oxygen most living organisms need to survive. Plants also provide food for plant-eating animals. One characteristic of plants is that they usually aren't able to move by themselves. Examples include moss, trees, shrubs, and flowers.

Animals

Animals can move. Animals get the nutrients they need to survive by eating other organisms. Some animals eat plants and others eat meat. **Insects**, birds, reptiles, and **mammals** all belong to the Animal kingdom.

Fungi

Fungi differ from plants in that they cannot make their own food. They need to ingest ("eat") other organisms to get their nutrients. Fungi range in size from microscopic to an enormous 10 km² and can live for more than 8 500 years. Fungi are the largest organisms on Earth. Mushrooms, yeast, and moulds all belong to the Fungi kingdom.

Bacteria

Bacteria are single-celled **micro-organisms** that are able to survive in many habitats. Bacteria can assist in digestion and breaking down dead matter.

Archaea

This group contains single-celled micro-organisms that can be found in a wide range of habitats, including thermal vents and hot springs.

Protista

These are all the other organisms that don't quite fit into any other group. They make their homes in rivers, lakes, ponds, marshes, the ocean, and moist environments.



The blue whale is the largest mammal on Earth. It belongs to the Animal kingdom.



Brown algae are in the Protista kingdom and are commonly known as "kelp." Kelp forests provide food and habitats for many organisms.