



## Species Scape

When we think of life on Earth, we usually think of the organisms we know best—mammals, plants, and perhaps birds and fish. But the bulk of life is composed of smaller organisms that often go unnoticed. The Species Scape shows organisms as they would appear if their size reflected their diversity. The giant fly represents the more than one million insects that have been described, while the tiny elk represents the 5,898 species of mammals.

We truly live in an insect dominated world, though there are tens of thousands of species of plants, fungi, and various worms and other invertebrates. Currently, over two million species have been described, but some estimates suggest this is only half of the world's total. Others predict even more species are left to discover. As researchers find and catalogue new species, the size of organisms on the Species Scape will inevitably change.

Protecting biodiversity is just as important as cataloging it. The Species Scape shows us that the organisms we think about least may be the ones that need our protection most.

Created by Cliff Pennix & Magdalena Berger, modified from Whittaker. Insect diversity and habitat requirements. *Am. Geologist*. 2004, 36(1): 30-33



Species described

1. Insects	1,063,578
2. Plants	422,000
3. Non-insect arthropods	203,462
4. Fungi	100,000
5. Mollusks	84,977
6. Fish	32,834
7. Flatworms (Platyhelminthes)	29,487
8. Roundworms (Nematoda)	25,033
9. Chromista (Algae & allies)	17,892
10. Reptiles & Amphibians	17,782
11. Segmented worms (Annelida)	17,388
12. Crustaceans	10,183
13. Birds	10,055
14. Sponges (Porifera)	8,659
15. Protozoans	8,118
16. Echinoderms	7,550
17. Mammals	5,898