

22 biodiversity scientists

From arachnologists, to primatologists, scientists working in fields related to biodiversity increase our understanding of the incredible diversity of life on Earth and the environmental challenges we face. For the International Day for Biodiversity on 22 May, we are recognizing 22 amazing scientists who have expanded our knowledge of biodiversity. We send our thanks to all the scientists included in this list, as well as the many other scientists around the world working in support of biodiversity.

1. E.O. Wilson

The late Edward Osborne Wilson was a notable American biologist who was an expert on ants. He was partially responsible for coining the term "biological diversity". Wilson is remembered for his years of professorship, his books on evolutionary biology, and his work in advocating for biodiversity. Read more

2. Thomas Lovejoy

Often referred to as the "godfather of biodiversity", the late Dr. Thomas Lovejoy was a prominent conservation biologist who worked at the intersection of environmental policy and science. Dr. Lovejoy was one of the first people to direct attention to the issue of tropical deforestation. Read more

3. Jo-Anne Sewial

The late Jo-Anne Nina Sewlal was an arachnologist from Trinidad and Tobago. She was known for having discovered various new species of spiders in her country. She was also responsible for

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publishing some of the first surveys of spider populations in many Caribbean countries. Read more

4. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka

As the first wildlife veterinarian in her home country of Uganda, Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka is a trailblazer. Amongst her many achievements, she has starred in her very own BBC documentary, Gladys the African Vet. In 2021, she was awarded the United Nations Environment Programme's Champion of the Earth award for her efforts in safeguarding some of the world's most endangered primates. Read more

5. Jane Goodall

Dr. Jane Goodall has been a monumental figure in conservation science. Hailing from the United Kingdom, she became a household name for her research at the Gombe forest in the 1960s, which revealed a world of unknown knowledge on chimpanzees. Her most notable discovery is the use of tools by chimpanzees. She has raised awareness about the importance of protecting the primates from extinction and emphasized the need to include the perspectives of local people in conservation. Read more

6. Biruté Galdikas

A professor at Simon Fraser University in Canada, the Lithuanian-Canadian scientist Biruté Galdikas holds many titles including primatologist, conservationist, author, ethologist, and anthropologist. She is well known for being a leading authority on orangutans. Alongside Jane Goodall, Galdikas was one of three women who was selected by the anthropologist Louis Leakey to study primates. Read more

7. Sylvia Earle

Sylvia Earle is an American marine biologist and oceanographer who was the first female chief scientist at the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. She is also known to have been National Geographic Society's first female explorer in residence.

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She also founded the organisation Mission Blue, an organisation whose mission it is to protect the ocean and the biodiversity within it. Read more

8. Sandra Myrna Diaz

An Argentinian ecologist and professor of ecology at the National University of Còrdoba, Dr. Sandra Diaz is among the top 1% of most cited scientists in the world. Her areas of focus are biodiversity, plant ecology, and the effect of environmental change on the regional biodiversity of plant ecosystems. She also served as Co-Chair of the IPBES Global Assessment, which was released in 2019. Read more

9. Kai Chan

Kai Chan is a professor at the Institute of Resources, Environment, and Sustainability at the University of British Columbia in Canada. He also served as a Coordinating Lead Author of the IPBES Global Assessment, which was released in 2019. Read more

10. Corrie Moreau

Corrie Moreau is an American evolutionary biologist and entomologist, and specialises in the study of ants. Her research focuses on the evolution and diversification of ants. She is also very vocal about the importance of having more women in STEM and of increasing diversity overall in the sciences. Read more

11. María Elena Zaccagnini

Maria Elena Zaccagnini is a biologist and researcher at the National Agricultural Technology Institute in Argentina. She has also had several roles with IPBES, such as Chair of the Regional Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for the Americas. Read more

12. Guy Midgley

Guy Midgley of South Africa is an internationally renowned biodiversity and global change science expert. Midgley has worked extensively with IPBES, contributing to the IPBES Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration as well as the IPBES-IPCC co-sponsored workshop on biodiversity and climate change. Read more

13. Robert Scholes

The late Robert Scholes made significant contributions to the field of biological diversity in his lifetime. He helped author the third, fourth, and fifth IPCC Assessment reports, and co-chaired the IPBES Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration, and the Scientific Steering Committee of the IPBES-IPCC co-sponsored workshop on biodiversity and climate change. Read more

14. Hans-Otto Pörtner

A marine biologist and physician, Dr. Otto-Pörtner is well known for his groundbreaking theories on the effects of ocean warming, hypoxia, and ocean acidification on marine ecosystems and organisms. He also co-chaired the joint IPCC-IPBES Scientific Steering Committee workshop on biodiversity and climate change. Read more

15. Toby Kiers

Dr. Toby Kiers is an evolutionary biologist who co-founded the Society for the Protection of Underground Networks (SPUN) to map Earth's fungal networks. Dr. Kiers is also a research chair and a professor at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. She is known for her research on the evolution of symbiotic trade. SPUN recognizes the important role fungal networks play in sequestering carbon, and in moving soil nutrients around. Read more

16. Rebecca Pradhan

Born in Taba, Bhutan, ecologist Rebecca Pradhan has always had a keen interest in local species and nature. She is a senior ecologist for the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN), a Bhutanese environmental NGO. Dr. Pradhan uses her local knowledge of Himalayan flora and fauna to develop effective conservation programs such as community level education. Read more

17. Yadvinder Malhi

Yadvinder Malhi is a professor who specialises in ecosystem science at the University of Oxford. His work focuses on the functioning of terrestrial ecosystems and the way they respond to challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss. Read more

18. Vera Imperatriz-Fonseca

Vera Imperatriz-Fonseca is known for her extensive work on pollinators, especially bees. She worked on the São Paulo Declaration on Pollinators, which was the predecessor of the International Pollinator Initiative (IPI). She was also a Co-Chair of the IPBES Assessment Report on Pollinators, Pollination and Food Production. Read more

19. Rachel Chan

Rachel Chan is a biochemist who hails from Argentina. She is most prominently known for her work inventing drought-resistant seeds. Among her many achievements, she was included in a list of ten most outstanding women scientists in Latin America by the British Broadcasting Corporation. Read more

20. Markus Fischer

Markus Fischer is a doctor and professor at the University of Bern in Switzerland. In addition to biodiversity, his research interests include Conservation Biology, Mountains, and Science-Policy Work. Through applied plant research across scales and environments,

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he studies the drivers of biodiversity change and the consequences of these changes on ecosystems, human society, and more. He has contributed to several IPBES assessments. Read more

21. Sir Robert Watson

Sir Robert Watson is known for being an expert on biodiversity and climate change. He is the only person to have served as the Chair of both the IPCC and IPBES. Most recently, he co-lead the United Nations Environment Programme synthesis report "Making Peace With Nature: A scientific blueprint to tackle the climate, biodiversity and pollution emergencies", which focused on how to combat climate change pollution and biodiversity loss within the framework of sustainable development. He received the 2014 UNEP Champions of the Earth award for his work. Read more

22. Ivar A. Baste

Ivar A. Baste is a Senior Advisor with the Norwegian Environment Agency and has made significant contributions to global environmental assessments over the past 30 years, working with organisations such as the United Nations Environment Programme and IPBES. Alongside Sir Robert Watson, he co-lead the United Nations Environment Programme synthesis report "Making Peace With Nature: A scientific blueprint to tackle the climate, biodiversity and pollution emergencies". Read more

Propose your own list of 22 biodiversity-related items (guidelines) >

#BiodiversityDay #COP15 #ForNature

Disclaimer

We acknowledge that there are thousands of individuals and organizations around the world undertaking extraordinary work for biodiversity each and every day.

The information provided within each list of 22 biodiversity-related items is meant to create engagement and participation in the Biodiversity Day campaign and is by no means exhaustive or fully representative of all the initiatives taking place around the globe or all the individuals, organizations, and entities that promote biodiversity. We apologize for any inconvenience or misunderstanding this could cause and we look forward to your feedback. Please contact us for any comments and suggestions to rectify any inconsistencies. More importantly, we also invite you to create your own lists of 22 biodiversity-related items, which will be more representative of your work and adapted to your topic of interest.

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