

Naming Nature

Learn about Carl Linnaeus and the Science of Classification

Who was Carl LINNAEUS? Carl Linnaeus [*Lin-ay-us*] was a botanist (a person who studies plants) from Sweden. As a boy, his father Nils had taught him all about the plants surrounding their house and by the time he was five years old Carl even had his own small garden to look after. He learned that **every living thing had a name**, in the same way that each person has a name. This allows us to recognise it, and more importantly in science, to speak to others about it!

So what was the PROBLEM? In Carl's day, many people across the world would write to each other in Latin, especially about science. The trouble was, plants and animals had really long names in Latin; long sentences would describe *everything* about the animal or plant. It was too hard to keep track of everything, and confusing.

What did Linnaeus DO? Carl came up with a way to group and name everything in nature in two categories: **GENUS** and **SPECIES**. This way everyone could easily see which living things were related. Sorting living things into related groups is called **classification**.

Why are NAMES important? If we didn't know the names of the animals, plants and fungi on Earth, we wouldn't know if something was new to science, and we wouldn't know if something had become extinct. **Without these names, and classification, we wouldn't be able to measure life on our planet.** This is more important now than ever before.



CARL LINNAEUS: FAST FACTS

- NAME:** Carl Nilsson Linnaeus
- BORN:** 23 May 1707 in Råshult, Sweden
- DIED:** 10 January 1778 in Uppsala, Sweden
- MARRIED:** Sara Elisabeth Moraea in 1739
- CHILDREN:** 7—Carl, Elisabeth Christina, Sara Magdalena, Lovisa, Sara Christina, Johannes and Sophia
- JOBS:** Taught *Botany*, the study of plants, and became Professor of Medicine at Uppsala University in Sweden
- TRIVIA:** 1,600 books in his library!
40,000 plant and animal specimens in his collections!

Species Named By Linnaeus

Do you recognise them?

Pongo pygmaeus
Named in 1758

Canis lupus
Named in 1758



Carcharodon carcharias
Named in 1758



Colour Carl

Colour in this picture of Carl Linnaeus and send us a scan (or the original if you can part with it!) and we might even upload it onto our website!
education@linnean.org



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