Scientists around the world use a two-part naming system to identify living things. You can learn it too.

**WHAT DOES A** wildlife biologist call a beaver? *Castor canadensis.*

What does a botanist call a red pine? *Pinus resinosa.*

Scientists use two names for every known animal, plant, fungus, protozoan, and bacterium. These scientific names most often come from Latin. The first name tells you which genus a creature belongs to. The second name identifies its species. In the 1700s, a Swedish botanist named Carl Linnaeus set up this universal naming system. Scientists around the world now use it to describe living things, including you (*Homo sapiens*).

Read on to learn the scientific names of some Minnesota mammals, birds, bugs, trees, flowers, fish, and fungi. Do you recognize the animal or the plant? To find its common name, turn to page 28. See how many scientific names you can memorize.

**Alces alces** is Minnesota’s largest member of the deer family. With long legs and wide hoofs, it moves easily through marshes in summer and snow in winter.

**Bison bison** once thrived on prairies. This big grass-eating mammal no longer roams wild in Minnesota, but a herd of about 100 lives at Blue Mounds State Park.
**C** *Canis lupus* roams northern Minnesota in a group known as a pack. This animal feeds on deer, moose, and smaller mammals, such as beaver and snowshoe hare.

**D** *Danaus plexippus* is Minnesota’s state butterfly. Each fall millions of these familiar insects migrate to wintering grounds in the mountains of Mexico.

**E** *Erethizon dorsatus* lives in the northern two-thirds of Minnesota. Its scientific name, loosely translated from Latin, means “the animal with an irritating back.”

G *Gavia immer*, Minnesota’s state bird, can barely walk on land, but it dives and swims underwater with ease to catch small fish.

H *Homo sapiens* lives all around Minnesota and the world. The Minnesota population of this species is more than 5 million.

I *Iris versicolor*, a native wildflower, blooms in June on a stem up to 2 feet tall. It grows in marshes and other wet places.

J *Junco hyemalis* can be seen year-round in northeastern Minnesota, but in winter these birds show up all over the state.
**K** Kalmia polifolia grows in bogs. Its genus name honors Swedish botanist Peter Kalm, who traveled North America in the 1700s.

**L** Lynx canadensis is a rare wildcat in northern Minnesota. This feline sports ear tufts, a goatee, and large snowshoe-like paws.

**M** Morchella esculentoides, our state mushroom, is a delicious treat when cooked. It pops up in forests in April and May.

**N** Necturus maculosus is Minnesota’s largest salamander species. It lives in water during every stage of its life cycle.

**O** Ondatra zibethicus is an herbivore living in wetlands throughout Minnesota. Its species name means “musky odor” in Latin.

**P** Pinus resinosa is our state tree. It can reach heights of more than 100 feet and live as long as 400 years.

**Q** Quercus rubra is common in Minnesota hardwood forests. It can grow up to 110 feet tall.

**R** Reithrodontomys megalotis lives in grassy areas of southern Minnesota. It harvests seeds and caterpillars to eat.
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T. Taxidea taxus spends much of its time underground hunting for mice, ground squirrels, and deep-burrowing pocket gophers.

U. Ursus americanus, an omnivore, uses its keen sense of smell to find nuts, berries, honey, insects, and other food to eat.

W. Wallengrenia egeremet flies around fields and woodland edges, feeding on the nectar of wildflowers from late June until early August.
You might be able to find a native plant or animal with a genus name starting with Y ... but we couldn't.

**Zizania palustris**, Minnesota's state grain, is a grass that grows in lakes and streams. People harvest the seeds in late summer to dry and later cook.

**Note to Teachers**
Find links to teachers guides for this and other stories at [www.mndnr.gov/young_naturalists](http://www.mndnr.gov/young_naturalists).