

Who is *Alces alces*?

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.



JIM BRANDENBURG

A *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.



JIM BRANDENBURG

B *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.



JIM BRANDENBURG

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.



BILL JOHNSON

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



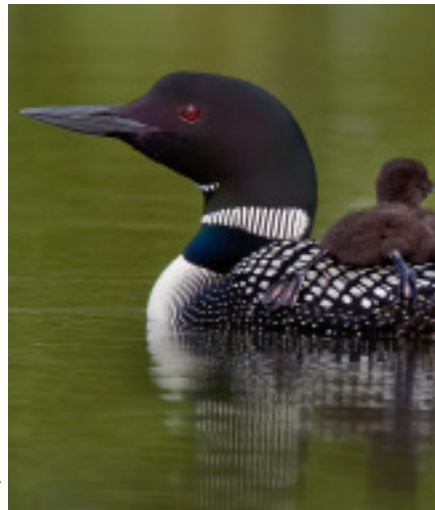
BILL MARCHEL

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."



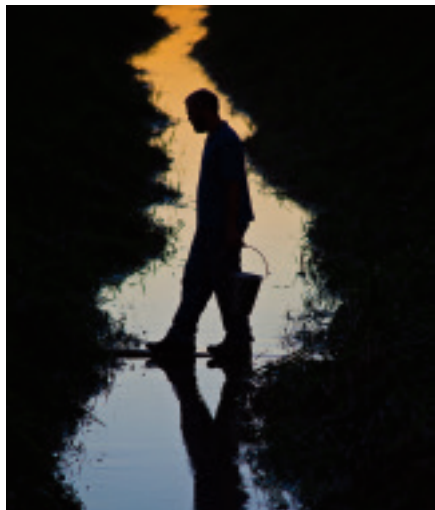
BILL JOHNSON

F *Fragaria vesca* translated from Latin means “fragrant berry.” Its delicious red berries appear in early June.



JIM BRANDENBURG

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



JUDY OLAUSEN

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



BILL JOHNSON

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.



MICHAEL FURTMAN

J *Junco hyemalis* can be seen year-round in northeastern Minnesota, but in winter these birds show up all over the state.



PETER M. DZIUK

K *Kalmia polifolia* grows in bogs. Its genus name honors Swedish botanist Peter Kalm, who traveled North America in the 1700s.



JASON MANDICH

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



BILL JOHNSON

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



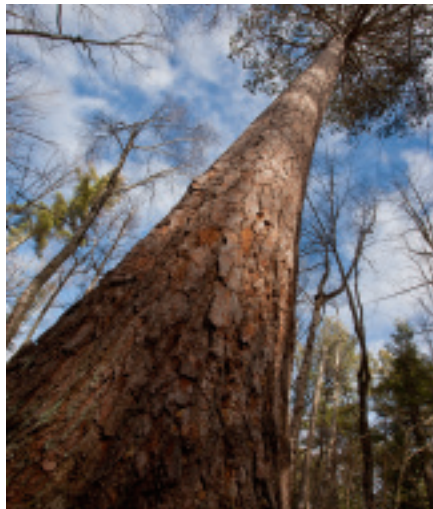
ALLEN BLAKE SHELDON

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



BILL MARCHEL

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



RICHARD HAMILTON SMITH

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



GARY ALAN NELSON

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



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R *Reithrodontomys megalotis* lives in grassy areas of southern Minnesota. It harvests seeds and caterpillars to eat.



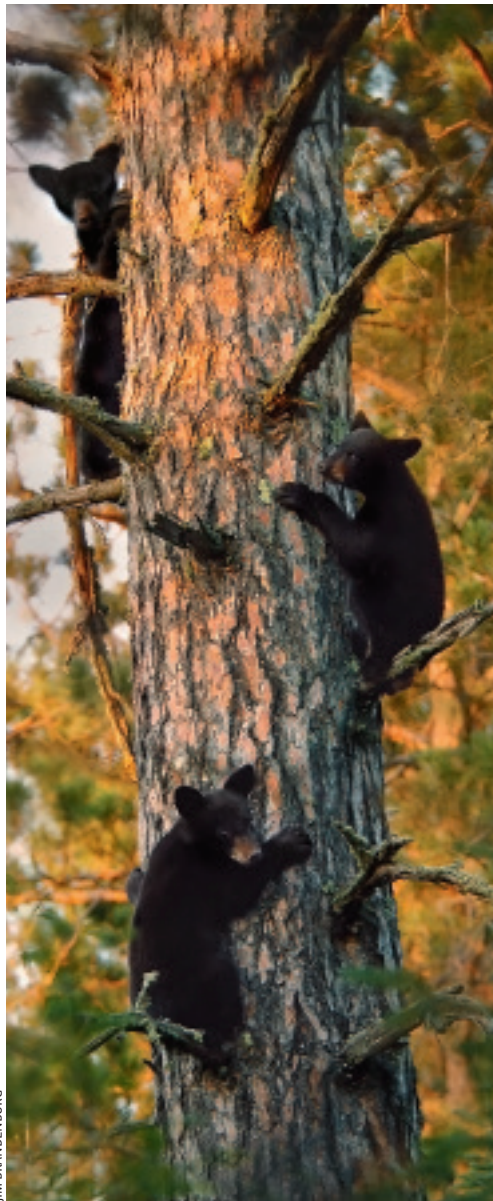
ERIC ENGBRETSON

S *Sander vitreus* is our state fish and also Minnesota's most popular species to catch. Anglers catch about 4 million pounds a year.



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T *Taxidea taxus* spends much of its time underground hunting for mice, ground squirrels, and deep-burrowing pocket gophers.



JIM BRANDENBURG

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



BILL MARCHEL

V *Vulpes vulpes* resides in all parts of the state, including cities. A predator, it usually hunts alone and at night for rabbits, mice, squirrels, and other prey.



ALLEN BLAKE SHELTON

W *Wallengrenia egeremet* flies around fields and woodland edges, feeding on the nectar of wildflowers from late June until early August.



ROBERT SERVANCCKX

X *Xysticus transversatus* is one of many species in this genus. It sits on a leaf and waits for an insect to walk by, then quickly grabs its prey with its front legs.

Answers:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| A. moose | K. swamp laurel |
| B. buffalo | L. lynx |
| C. gray wolf | M. morel mushroom |
| D. monarch butterfly | N. mudpuppy |
| E. porcupine | O. muskrat |
| F. woodland strawberry | P. red pine |
| G. common loon | Q. red oak |
| H. human | R. western harvest mouse |
| I. blue flag iris | S. walleye |
| J. dark-eyed junco | T. badger |

- | | |
|--|---|
| U. black bear | X. transverse-banded crab spider |
| V. red fox | Y. ? |
| W. northern broken-dash butterfly | Z. wild rice |



NOTE TO TEACHERS

Find links to teachers guides for this and other stories at www.mndnr.gov/young_naturalists.



Y You might be able to find a native plant or animal with a genus name starting with Y ... but we couldn't.

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RICHARD HAMILTON SMITH

Z *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. 