

# The COPUS Clarion

A monthly newsletter of the COPUS network Volume 3 Issue 9 September 2009

*The Coalition on the Public Understanding of Science (COPUS) is a grassroots effort linking universities, scientific societies, science centers and museums, advocacy groups, media, educators, government agencies, businesses, and industry in a peer network having as its goal a greater public understanding of the nature of science and its value to society.*

## Building the Encyclopedia of Life -- One Community at a Time

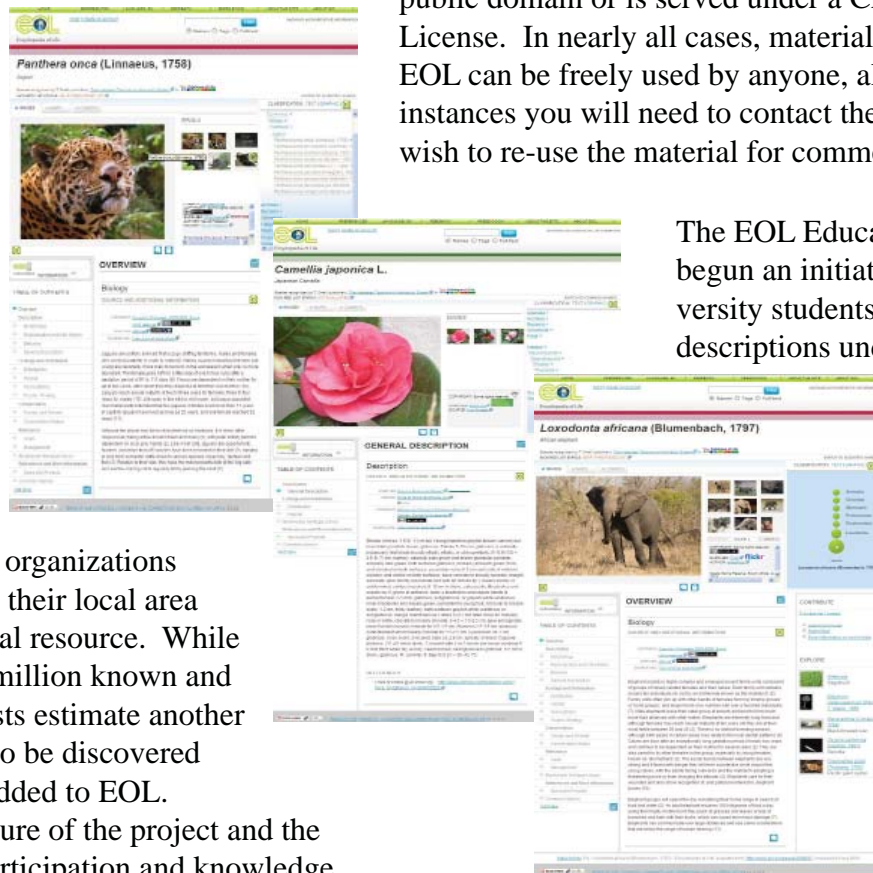
The Encyclopedia of Life (EOL) was established to make comprehensive, authenticated information about the world's biodiversity freely available over the Internet. EOL's portal currently includes more than 160,000 authenticated species pages, another 1.4 million base pages and links to 13 million pages of digitized biodiversity literature. The features available on the EOL portal make participation possible by everyone. Users including students, scientists and members of the public are invited to contribute photos and videos via the EOL Flickr Group, apply tags to images, provide comments on the content and add text.

Scientists can work with school groups or community organizations to learn about biodiversity in their local area while helping to build a global resource. While there are approximately 1.8 million known and named species today, scientists estimate another 10 to 30 million species yet to be discovered and named, and eventually added to EOL. Because of the enormous nature of the project and the desire to have community participation and knowledge in building EOL, the project has focused on building participatory and collaborative web tools for diverse audiences of all ages to contribute to this global resource.

Expanding content on the current 160,000 species pages or uploading images and information on the base pages are engaging and gratifying activities. Scientists can become curators of species pages, organize a LifeDesk and help their community members to identify species so they can contribute information to EOL about their local biodiversity.

EOL is a reliable reference for a wide range of information about species, including but not limited to life history, molecular biology and genetics and current conservation status and threats. All content and multi-media resources are provided through EOL is either in the public domain or is served under a Creative Commons License. In nearly all cases, material available through EOL can be freely used by anyone, although in some instances you will need to contact the data partner if you wish to re-use the material for commercial purposes.

The EOL Education group has begun an initiative in which university students write species page descriptions under the direction of their professors. To date, positive responses have been received about this activity from both students and professors, with indications that contributing to a global endeavor such as EOL, is very motivating.



Information, images, videos and other content coming into EOL from various audiences is differentiated so the end-users know the source of the information and whether or not it has been authenticated by the scientific community. If a user chooses to see "all" information, they will notice that unauthenticated information is distinguished from authenticated information on each species page with a yellow background for photos and text. Users can choose whether to view unauthenticated content by using the slider on any species page or through the preferences menu on the top.

## How Can You Help Build the Encyclopedia of Life?

Let us count the ways...



### ➤ Add Text

Look for the add new text button on EOL taxon pages, or use the Add New link at the bottom of the TABLE OF CONTENTS. New text will initially appear with a yellow background indicating that it is not yet part of the authoritative EOL collection. Curators will review your submission and will promote suitable content to trusted status. Visit [www.eol.org](http://www.eol.org) to create your free EOL member account and start adding information.

### ➤ Contribute Images and Videos

The easiest way to contribute images and videos to EOL is through our Flickr group. Basic Flickr accounts are free, and it's easy to tag your images for EOL use. We harvest the group pool almost daily, so your images and videos will show up quickly on EOL pages. To see recent submissions, be sure to pull the INFORMATION slider to "All" on EOL taxon pages; this allows you to see images and videos that have not yet been reviewed by curators.

### ➤ Comment and Tag

Look for the comment and tag buttons on EOL pages to annotate EOL content. Information providers and EOL visitors will be able to see and respond to your comments, so this is a good way of pointing out problems or requesting additional information. Adding tags to text, images, and other media will help you and other people to find things more easily on the EOL web site.

### ➤ Student Scientists

Students can use their class work to start contributing to the EOL. Adding text and images for your favorite organisms can be a good first step. Talk to your teacher about class projects that might involve EOL. You can also add tags to our images and comment on the contents of the web site.

### ➤ Undergraduate Contributions

If you are a teacher or college faculty member and would like your students to contribute to the Encyclopedia of Life, we have resources for you. Please contact our Education Project Coordinator who will direct you to a partner project, such as Animal Diversity Web. For more info, check out the Education section on the EOL web site.

Please contact us at [education@eol.org](mailto:education@eol.org) or post a comment on our forum (<https://eol.uservoice.com>) under the Education section.



Image Credit: <http://scienceatcal.berkeley.edu/node/19>

DON'T MISS THE YoS 2009 HIGHLIGHTS CELEBRATING SEPTEMBER'S THEME OF BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION!

YEAR of SCIENCE 2009  
Explore. Empower. Engage...

Questions? Comments? Ideas? Contact [admin@copusproject.org](mailto:admin@copusproject.org).

Support for COPUS planning workshops was provided by the National Science Foundation under grant numbers EAR-0606600, EAR-0628790, and EAR-0814048 to the University of California Museum of Paleontology. The cognizant fiduciary body for COPUS and the Year of Science 2009 project is the American Institute of Biological Sciences Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which is providing staffing support, IT, and other resources. The Geological Society of America, the University of California Museum of Paleontology, and the National Science Teachers Association are also contributing funds for COPUS and the Year of Science 2009. The Steering Committee welcomes support from additional scientific organizations and is also pursuing funding from federal agencies and private foundations.

