

Unit 2

The Diversity of What

Biological diversity is the variety of living things. When most people use the term they actually mean the number of living things. That is certainly one aspect of biodiversity. It's not the only one though. Diversity exists at many levels. Probably the most elemental is genetic diversity. Why are pest microbes and insects so difficult to control with antibiotics or chemicals? Often because a few individuals possess genes that make them resistant to the chemical. The fact that we continually alter the broth and they continually adapt is evidence for high genetic diversity. Of course, it is individual organisms that possess genes, so they, or populations of them, or species made up of them, are most often the units of diversity that we think about.

Even if we are thinking of species diversity, we must consider not only the number of species, but also the amount of each one. The diversity of a (natural) community with two species in equal numbers is greater than the diversity of a community with two species, one of which occurs only once. So diversity has to do with the number of species and the evenness of the amounts of each one.

Species Diversity - the number of species
- the evenness of amounts of each one



Greater diversity