

Evolution, the Themes of Biology, and Scientific Inquiry

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▲ **Figure 1.1** A western pygmy possum (*Cercartetus concinnus*) seeking nectar in a banksia flower.

KEY CONCEPTS

- 1.1** The study of life reveals unifying themes
- 1.2** The Core Theme: Evolution accounts for the unity and diversity of life
- 1.3** In studying nature, scientists make observations and form and test hypotheses
- 1.4** Science benefits from a cooperative approach and diverse viewpoints



Inquiring About Life

In brief periods of fine weather, you might be lucky enough to see a western pygmy possum (*Cercartetus concinnus*) emerge from a tree or rock hollow in Australia's south-west. These solitary, nocturnal animals forage for pollen and nectar in plants like the scarlett banksia (*Banksia coccinea*) (**Figure 1.1**). Barely 9 cm long, the western pygmy possum relies on an energy-rich diet to fuel a metabolism so rapid that failing to eat on successive nights may see the animal starve to death. Thus, during periods of cold and/or rain, which could prove fatal to the possum, the animal enters an incredibly deep sleep, called torpor. A very slow heartbeat, limited oxygen consumption, and a body temperature cooled to only a degree or two above the air temperature in its hollow allow the animal to conserve energy for up to a week. How has the pygmy possum's ability to enter torpor matched, or *adapted*, to the local conditions?

An organism's adaptations to its environment are the result of *evolution*, the process of change over time that has resulted in the astounding array of organisms found on Earth. Evolution is the fundamental principle of biology and the core theme of this book.

Although biologists know a great deal about life on Earth, many mysteries remain. Posing questions about the living world and seeking answers through scientific inquiry are the central activities of **biology**, the scientific study of life. Biologists' questions can be ambitious. They may ask how a single tiny cell

◀ The characteristic red-tinged fur of the barely 9 cm long western pygmy possum distinguishes the animal from its grey-coated eastern cousins.

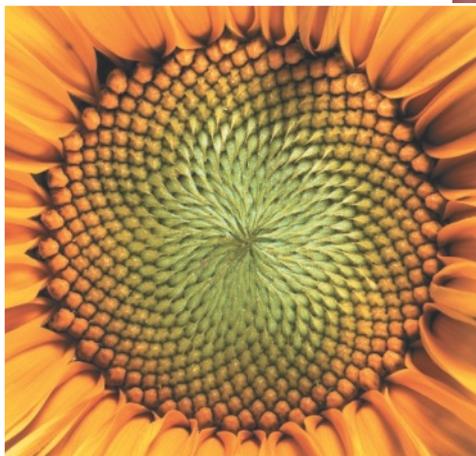
becomes a tree or a dog, how the human mind works, or how the different forms of life in a forest interact. When questions occur to you as you observe the natural world, you are thinking like a biologist. More than anything else, biology is a quest, an ongoing inquiry about the nature of life.

At the most fundamental level, we may ask: What is life? Even a child realises that a dog or a plant is alive, while a rock or a car is not. Yet the phenomenon we call life defies a simple, one-sentence definition. We recognise life by what living things do. **Figure 1.2** highlights some of the properties and processes we associate with life.

While limited to a handful of images, Figure 1.2 reminds us that the living world is wondrously varied. How do biologists make sense of this diversity and complexity? This opening chapter sets up a framework for answering this question. The first part of the chapter provides a panoramic view of the biological “landscape,” organised around some unifying themes. We then focus on biology’s core theme, evolution, which accounts for life’s unity and diversity. Next, we look at scientific inquiry—how scientists ask and attempt to answer questions about the natural world. Finally, we address the culture of science and its effects on society.

▼ **Figure 1.2 Some properties of life.**

▼ **Order.** This close-up of a sunflower illustrates the highly ordered structure that characterises life.



▲ **Evolutionary adaptation.** The overall appearance of this pygmy sea horse camouflages the animal in its environment. Such adaptations evolve over countless generations by the reproductive success of those individuals with heritable traits that are best suited to their environments.



▲ **Regulation.** The regulation of blood flow through the blood vessels of this bilby’s ears helps maintain a constant body temperature by adjusting heat exchange with the surrounding air.



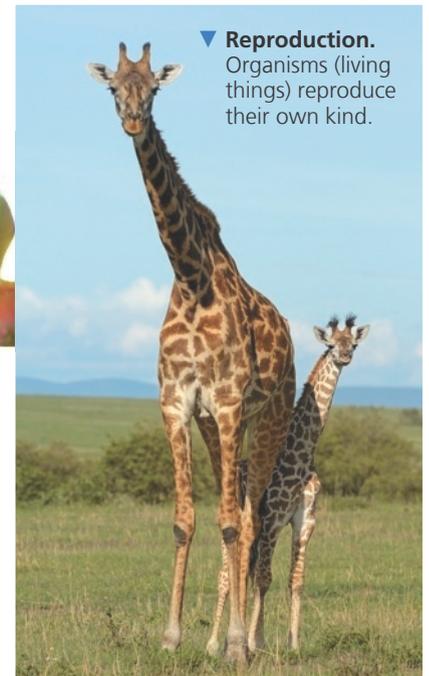
▲ **Energy processing.** This butterfly obtains fuel in the form of nectar from flowers. The butterfly will use chemical energy stored in its food to power flight and other work.



▲ **Growth and development.** Inherited information carried by genes controls the pattern of growth and development of organisms, such as this oak seedling.



▲ **Response to the environment.** The Venus flytrap on the left closed its trap rapidly in response to the environmental stimulus of a grasshopper landing on the open trap.



▼ **Reproduction.** Organisms (living things) reproduce their own kind.

CONCEPT 1.1

The study of life reveals unifying themes

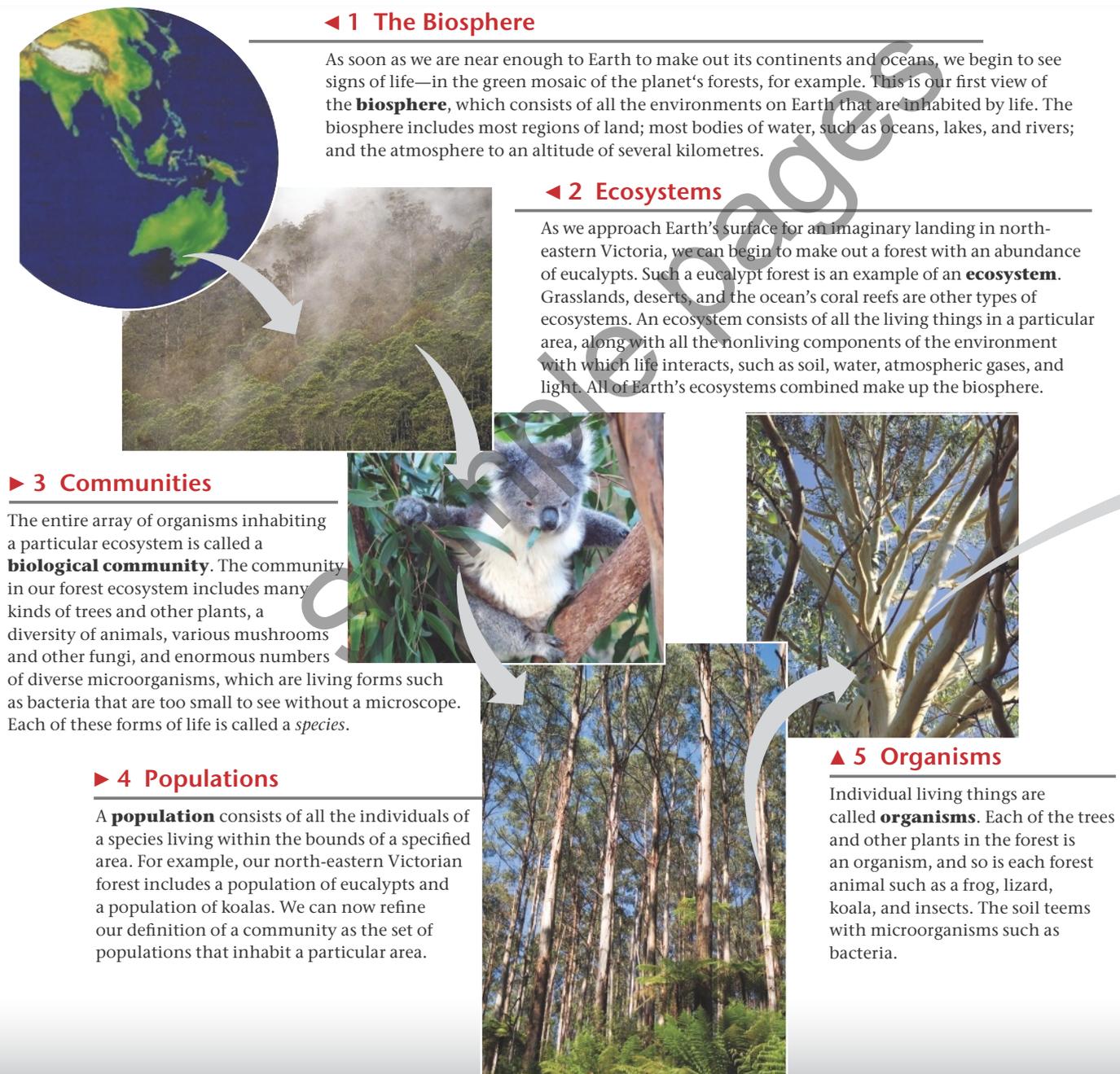
Biology is a subject of enormous scope, and exciting new biological discoveries are being made every day. How can you organise into a comprehensible framework all the information you'll encounter as you study the broad range of topics included in biology? Focusing on a few big ideas will help.

Here are five unifying themes—ways of thinking about life that will still hold true decades from now.

- Organisation
- Information
- Energy and Matter
- Interactions
- Evolution

In this section and the next, we'll briefly define and explore each theme.

▼ Figure 1.3 Exploring Levels of Biological Organisation



Theme: New Properties Emerge at Successive Levels of Biological Organisation

ORGANISATION The study of life on Earth extends from the microscopic scale of the molecules and cells that make up organisms to the global scale of the entire living planet. As biologists, we can divide this enormous range into different levels of biological organisation. In **Figure 1.3**, we zoom in from space to take a closer and closer look at life in a eucalypt forest in eastern Victoria. This journey, depicted as a series of numbered steps, highlights the hierarchy of biological organisation.

Zooming in through the levels of the biological hierarchy at ever-finer resolution illustrates an approach called *reductionism*. This method is so named because it reduces complex systems to simpler components that are more manageable to study. Reductionism is a powerful strategy in biology. For example, by studying the molecular structure of DNA that had been extracted from cells, James Watson and Francis Crick inferred the chemical basis of biological inheritance. Reductionism has propelled many major discoveries, but it provides a necessarily incomplete view of life on Earth, as we'll discuss next.

▼ 6 Organs and Organ Systems

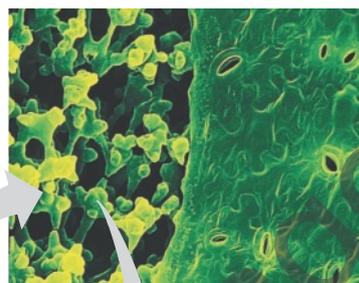
The structural hierarchy of life continues to unfold as we explore the architecture of the more complex organisms. A eucalypt leaf is an example of an **organ**, a body part consisting of two or more tissues (which we'll see upon our next scale change). Stems and roots are the other major organs of plants. Examples of human organs are the brain, heart, and kidneys. The organs of humans and other complex animals are organised into *organ systems*, each a team of organs that cooperate in a specific function. For example, the human digestive system includes such organs as the tongue, stomach, and intestines.

► 10 Molecules

Our last scale change vaults us into a chloroplast for a view of life at the molecular level. A **molecule** is a chemical structure consisting of two or more small chemical units called *atoms*, which are represented as balls in this computer graphic of a chlorophyll molecule. Chlorophyll is the pigment molecule that makes a eucalypt leaf green. One of the most important molecules on Earth, chlorophyll absorbs sunlight during the first step of photosynthesis. Within each chloroplast, millions of chlorophylls and other molecules are organised into the equipment that converts light energy to the chemical energy of food.

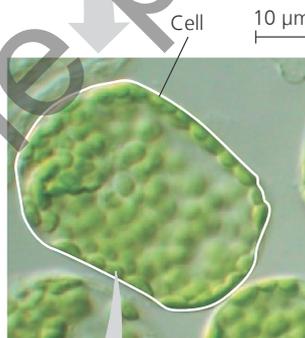
► 9 Organelles

Chloroplasts are examples of **organelles**, the various functional components that make up cells. In this figure, a very powerful tool called an electron microscope brings a single chloroplast into sharp focus.



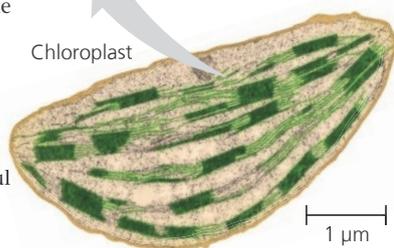
◀ 7 Tissues

Our next scale change—to see a leaf's **tissues**—requires a microscope. The leaf on the left has been cut on an angle. The honey-combed tissue in the interior of the leaf (left side of photo) is the main location of photosynthesis, the process that converts light energy to the chemical energy of sugar and other food. We are viewing the sliced leaf from a perspective that also enables us to see the jigsaw puzzle-like tissue called epidermis, the "skin" on the surface of the leaf (right side of photo). The pores through the epidermis allow the gas carbon dioxide (CO₂), a raw material for sugar production, to reach the photosynthetic tissue in the interior of the leaf. At this scale, we can also see that each tissue has a cellular structure. In fact, each kind of tissue is a group of similar cells.



▲ 8 Cells

The **cell** is life's fundamental unit of structure and function. Most organisms, such as amoebas and most bacteria, are single cells. Some organisms, including plants and animals, are multicellular. Instead of a single cell performing all the functions of life, a multicellular organism has a division of labour among specialised cells. A human body consists of trillions of microscopic cells of many different kinds, including muscle cells and nerve cells, which are organised into the various specialised tissues. For example, muscle tissue consists of bundles of muscle cells. And note again the cells of the tissue within a leaf's interior. Each of the cells you see is about 25 µm (micrometres) across. It would take 65 of these cells to reach across an "O" on this page. As small as these cells are, you can see that each contains numerous green structures called chloroplasts, which are responsible for photosynthesis.



Emergent Properties

Let's reexamine Figure 1.3, beginning this time at the molecular level and then zooming out. This approach allows us to see novel properties emerge at each level that are absent from the preceding one. These **emergent properties** are due to the arrangement and interactions of parts as complexity increases. For example, although photosynthesis occurs in an intact chloroplast, it will not take place in a disorganised test-tube mixture of chlorophyll and other chloroplast molecules. The coordinated processes of photosynthesis require a specific organisation of these molecules in the chloroplast. Isolated components of living systems—the objects of study in a reductionist approach—lack a number of significant properties that emerge at higher levels of organisation.

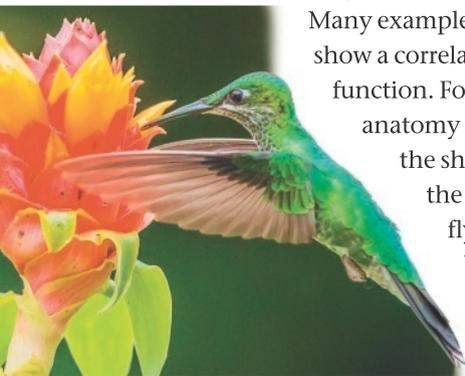
Emergent properties are not unique to life. A box of bicycle parts won't transport you anywhere, but if they are arranged in a certain way, you can pedal to your chosen destination. Compared with such nonliving examples, however, biological systems are far more complex, making the emergent properties of life especially challenging to study.

To fully explore emergent properties, biologists today complement reductionism with **systems biology**, the exploration of a biological system by analysing the interactions among its parts. In this context, a single leaf cell can be considered a system, as can a frog, an ant colony, or a desert ecosystem. By examining and modeling the dynamic behaviour of an integrated network of components, systems biology enables us to pose new kinds of questions. For example, how do networks of molecular interactions in our bodies generate our 24-hour cycle of wakefulness and sleep? At a larger scale, how does a gradual increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide alter ecosystems and the entire biosphere? Systems biology can be used to study life at all levels.

Structure and Function

At each level of the biological hierarchy, we find a correlation of structure and function. Consider a leaf in Figure 1.3: Its thin, flat shape maximises the capture of sunlight by chloroplasts. Because such correlations of structure and function are common in all forms of life, analysing a biological structure gives us clues about what it does and how it works.

Conversely, knowing the function of something provides insight into its structure and organisation. Many examples from the animal kingdom show a correlation between structure and function. For example, the hummingbird's anatomy allows the wings to rotate at the shoulder, so hummingbirds have the ability, unique among birds, to fly backwards or hover in place. While hovering, the birds can extend their long, slender beaks into flowers and feed on nectar. The elegant



match of form and function in the structures of life is explained by natural selection, which we'll explore shortly.

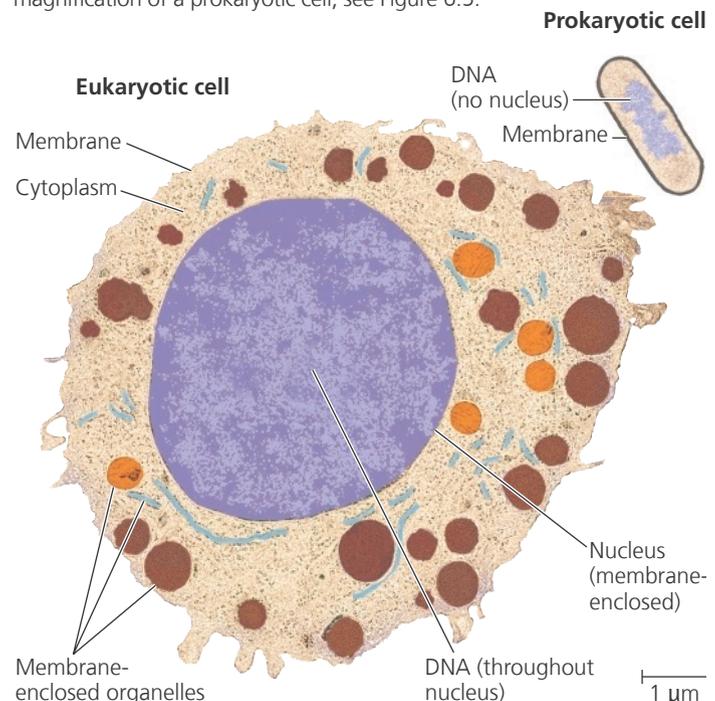
The Cell: An Organism's Basic Unit of Structure and Function

In life's structural hierarchy, the cell is the smallest unit of organisation that can perform all activities required for life. The so-called Cell Theory was first developed in the 1800s, based on the observations of many scientists. The theory states that all living organisms are made of cells, which are the basic unit of life. In fact, the actions of organisms are all based on the functioning of cells. For instance, the movement of your eyes as you read this sentence results from the activities of muscle and nerve cells. Even a process that occurs on a global scale, such as the recycling of carbon atoms, is the product of cellular functions, including the photosynthetic activity of chloroplasts in leaf cells.

All cells share certain characteristics. For instance, every cell is enclosed by a membrane that regulates the passage of materials between the cell and its surroundings. Nevertheless, we distinguish two main forms of cells: prokaryotic and eukaryotic. The cells of two groups of single-celled microorganisms—bacteria (singular, *bacterium*) and archaea (singular, *archaeon*)—are prokaryotic. All other forms of life, including plants and animals, are composed of eukaryotic cells.

A **eukaryotic cell** contains membrane-enclosed organelles (Figure 1.4). Some organelles, such as the DNA-containing nucleus, are found in the cells of all eukaryotes; other organelles

Figure 1.4 Contrasting eukaryotic and prokaryotic cells in size and complexity. The cells are shown to scale here; to see a larger magnification of a prokaryotic cell, see Figure 6.5.



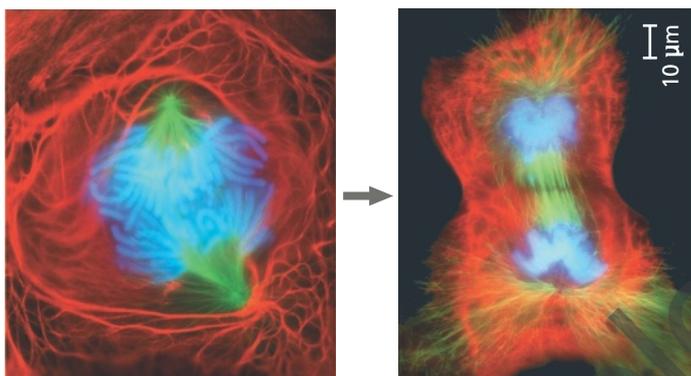
VISUAL SKILLS > Measure the scale bar and use its length to estimate the length of the prokaryotic cell and the longest dimension of the eukaryotic cell.

are specific to particular cell types. For example, the chloroplast in Figure 1.3 is an organelle found only in eukaryotic cells that carry out photosynthesis. In contrast to eukaryotic cells, a **prokaryotic cell** lacks a nucleus or other membrane-enclosed organelles. Furthermore, prokaryotic cells are generally smaller than eukaryotic cells, as shown in Figure 1.4.

Theme: Life's Processes Involve the Expression and Transmission of Genetic Information

INFORMATION Within cells, structures called chromosomes contain genetic material in the form of **DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid)**. In cells that are preparing to divide, the chromosomes may be made visible using a dye that appears blue when bound to the DNA (**Figure 1.5**).

▼ **Figure 1.5** A lung cell from a newt divides into two smaller cells that will grow and divide again.

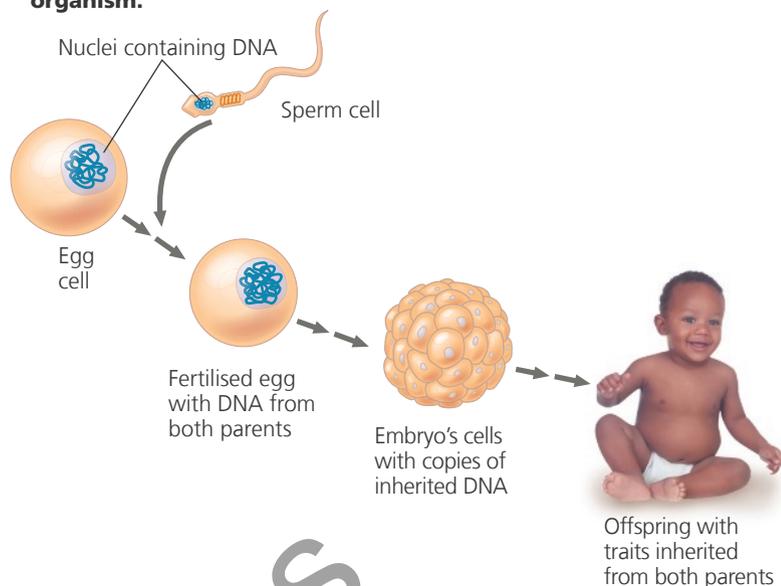


DNA, the Genetic Material

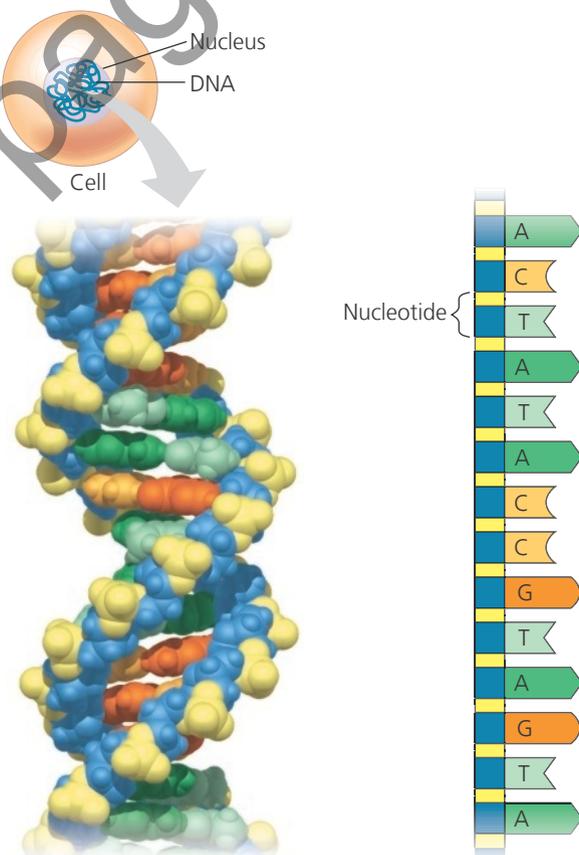
Before a cell divides, the DNA is first replicated, or copied, and each of the two cellular offspring inherits a complete set of chromosomes, identical to that of the parent cell. Each chromosome contains one very long DNA molecule with hundreds or thousands of **genes**, each a section of the DNA of the chromosome. Transmitted from parents to offspring, genes are the units of inheritance. They encode the information necessary to build all of the molecules synthesised within a cell, which in turn establish that cell's identity and function. You began as a single cell stocked with DNA inherited from your parents. The replication of that DNA prior to each cell division transmitted copies of the DNA to what eventually became the trillions of cells of your body. As the cells grew and divided, the genetic information encoded by the DNA directed your development (**Figure 1.6**).

The molecular structure of DNA accounts for its ability to store information. A DNA molecule is made up of two long chains, called strands, arranged in a double helix. Each chain is made up of four kinds of chemical building blocks called nucleotides, which are named adenine (A), guanine (G), cytosine (C), and thymine (T) (**Figure 1.7**). Specific sequences of these four nucleotides encode the information

▼ **Figure 1.6** Inherited DNA directs development of an organism.



▼ **Figure 1.7** DNA: The genetic material.



(a) **DNA double helix.** This model shows the atoms in a segment of DNA. Made up of two long chains (strands) of building blocks called nucleotides, a DNA molecule takes the three-dimensional form of a double helix.

(b) **Single strand of DNA.** These geometric shapes and letters are simple symbols for the nucleotides in a small section of one strand of a DNA molecule. Genetic information is encoded in specific sequences of the four types of nucleotides: adenine (A), guanine (G), cytosine (C), and thymine (T).

in genes. The way DNA encodes information is analogous to how we arrange the letters of the alphabet into words and phrases with specific meanings. The word *rat*, for example, evokes a rodent; the words *tar* and *art*, which contain the same letters, mean very different things. We can think of nucleotides as a four-letter alphabet.

For many genes, the sequence provides the blueprint for making a protein. For instance, a given bacterial gene may specify a particular protein (an enzyme) required to break down a certain sugar molecule, while a human gene may denote a different protein (an antibody) that helps fight off infection. Overall, proteins are major players in building and maintaining the cell and carrying out its activities.

Protein-encoding genes control protein production indirectly, using a related molecule called RNA (ribonucleic acid) as an intermediary (**Figure 1.8**). The sequence of nucleotides along a gene is transcribed into mRNA (messenger RNA), which is then translated into a linked series of protein building blocks called amino acids. Once completed, the amino acid chain forms a specific protein with a unique shape and function. The entire process by which the information in a gene directs the manufacture of a cellular product is called **gene expression**.

In carrying out gene expression, all forms of life employ essentially the same genetic code: A particular sequence of nucleotides says the same thing in one organism as it does in another. Differences between organisms reflect differences between their nucleotide sequences rather than between their genetic codes. This universality of the genetic code is a strong piece of evidence that all life is related. Comparing the sequences in several species for a gene that codes for a particular protein can provide valuable information both about the protein and about the relationship of the species to each other.

The mRNA molecule in Figure 1.8 is translated into a protein, but other cellular RNAs function differently. For example, we have known for decades that some types of RNA are actually components of the cellular machinery that manufactures proteins. Recently, scientists have discovered whole new classes of RNA that play other roles in the cell, such as regulating the functioning of protein-coding genes. Genes specify all of these RNAs as well, and their production is also referred to as gene expression. By carrying the instructions for making proteins and RNAs and by replicating with each cell division, DNA ensures faithful inheritance of genetic information from generation to generation.

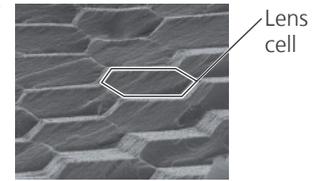
Genomics: Large-Scale Analysis of DNA Sequences

The entire “library” of genetic instructions that an organism inherits is called its **genome**. A typical human cell has two similar sets of chromosomes, and each set has approximately 3 billion nucleotide pairs of DNA. If the one-letter abbreviations for the nucleotides of a set were written in letters the

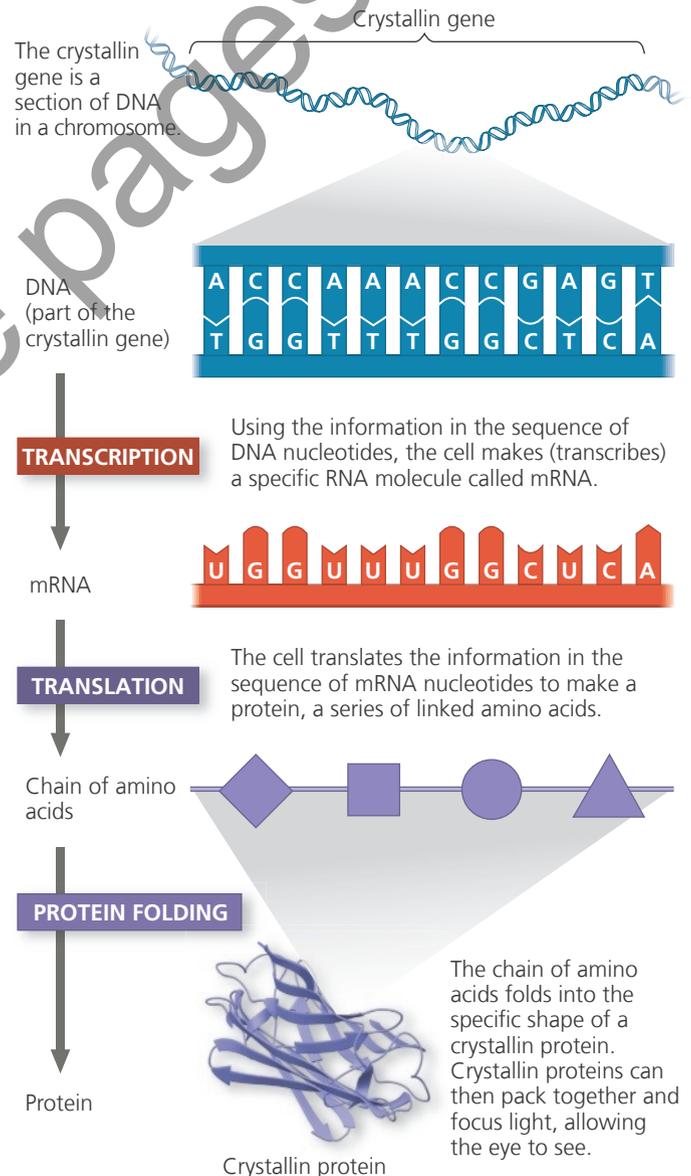
Figure 1.8 Gene expression: Cells use information encoded in a gene to synthesise a functional protein.



(a) The lens of the eye (behind the pupil) is able to focus light because lens cells are tightly packed with transparent proteins called crystallin. How do lens cells make crystallin proteins?



(b) A lens cell uses information in DNA to make crystallin proteins.



size of those you are now reading, the genomic text would fill about 700 biology textbooks.

Since the early 1990s, the pace at which researchers can determine the sequence of a genome has accelerated at an astounding rate, enabled by a revolution in technology. The genome sequence—the entire sequence of nucleotides for a representative member of a species—is now known for humans and many other animals, as well as numerous plants, fungi, bacteria, and archaea. To make sense of the deluge of data from genome-sequencing projects and the growing catalogue of known gene functions, scientists are applying a systems biology approach at the cellular and molecular levels. Rather than investigating a single gene at a time, researchers study whole sets of genes (or other DNA) in one or more species—an approach called **genomics**. Likewise, the term **proteomics** refers to the study of sets of proteins and their properties. (The entire set of proteins expressed by a given cell, tissue, or organism is called a **proteome**.)

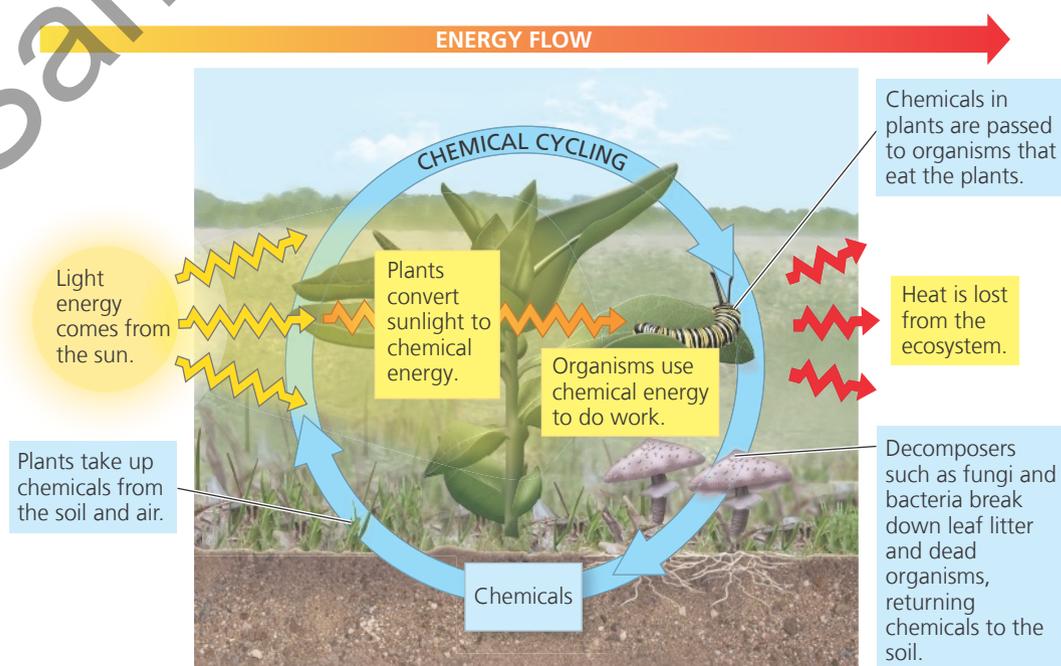
Three important research developments have made the genomic and proteomic approaches possible. One is “high-throughput” technology, tools that can analyse many biological samples very rapidly. The second major development is **bioinformatics**, the use of computational tools to store, organise, and analyse the huge volume of data that results from high-throughput methods. The third development is the formation of interdisciplinary research teams—groups of diverse specialists that may include computer scientists, mathematicians, engineers, chemists, physicists, and, of course, biologists from a variety of fields. Researchers in such teams aim to learn how the activities of all the proteins and RNAs encoded by the DNA are coordinated in cells and in whole organisms.

Theme: Life Requires the Transfer and Transformation of Energy and Matter

ENERGY AND MATTER A fundamental characteristic of living organisms is their use of energy to carry out life’s activities. Moving, growing, reproducing, and the various cellular activities of life are work, and work requires energy. The input of energy, primarily from the sun, and the transformation of energy from one form to another make life possible (**Figure 1.9**). When a plant’s leaves absorb sunlight, molecules within the leaves convert the energy of sunlight to the chemical energy of food, such as sugars, in the process of photosynthesis. The chemical energy in the food molecules is then passed along by plants and other photosynthetic organisms (**producers**) to consumers. **Consumers** are organisms, such as animals, that feed on other organisms or their remains.

When an organism uses chemical energy to perform work, such as muscle contraction or cell division, some of that energy is lost to the surroundings as heat. As a result, energy *flows through* an ecosystem in one direction, usually entering as light and exiting as heat. In contrast, chemicals *cycle within* an ecosystem, where they are used and then recycled (see **Figure 1.9**). Chemicals that a plant absorbs from the air or soil may be incorporated into the plant’s body and then passed to an animal that eats the plant. Eventually, these chemicals will be returned to the environment by decomposers such as bacteria and fungi that break down waste products, leaf litter, and the bodies of dead organisms. The chemicals are then available to be taken up by plants again, thereby completing the cycle.

► Figure 1.9 Energy flow and chemical cycling. There is a one-way flow of energy in an ecosystem: During photosynthesis, plants convert energy from sunlight to chemical energy (stored in food molecules such as sugars), which is used by plants and other organisms to do work and is eventually lost from the ecosystem as heat. In contrast, chemicals cycle between organisms and the physical environment.



Theme: From Molecules to Ecosystems, Interactions Are Important in Biological Systems

INTERACTIONS At any level of the biological hierarchy, interactions between the components of the system ensure smooth integration of all the parts, such that they function as a whole. This holds true equally well for molecules in a cell and the components of an ecosystem; we'll discuss both as examples.

Molecules: Interactions Within Organisms

At lower levels of organisation, the interactions between components that make up living organisms—organs, tissues, cells, and molecules—are crucial to their smooth operation. Consider the regulation of blood sugar levels, for instance. Cells in the body must match the supply of fuel (sugar) to demand, regulating the opposing processes of sugar breakdown and storage. The key is the ability of many biological processes to self-regulate by a mechanism called feedback.

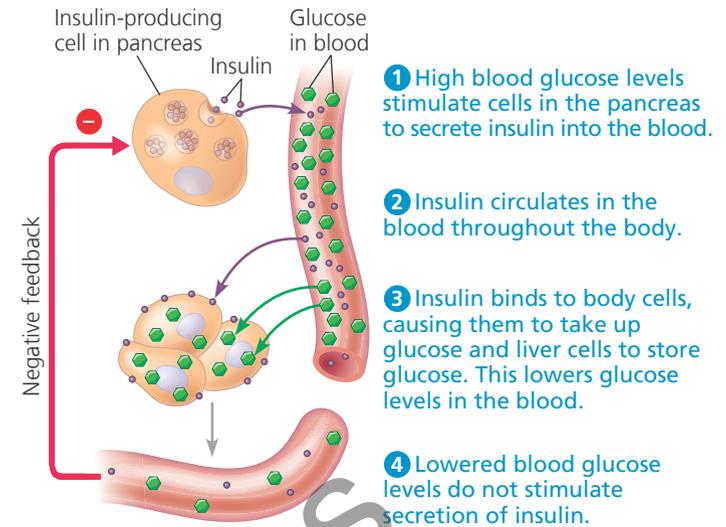
In **feedback regulation**, the output or product of a process regulates that very process. The most common form of regulation in living systems is *negative feedback*, a loop in which the response reduces the initial stimulus. As seen in the example of insulin signalling (**Figure 1.10**), after a meal the level of the sugar glucose in your blood rises, which stimulates cells of the pancreas to secrete insulin. Insulin, in turn, causes body cells to take up glucose and liver cells to store it, thus decreasing blood glucose levels. This eliminates the stimulus for insulin secretion, shutting off the pathway. Thus, the output of the process negatively regulates that process.

Though less common than processes regulated by negative feedback, there are also many biological processes regulated by *positive feedback*, in which an end product *speeds up* its own production. The clotting of your blood in response to injury is an example. When a blood vessel is damaged, structures in the blood called platelets begin to aggregate at the site. Positive feedback occurs as chemicals released by the platelets attract *more* platelets. The platelet pileup then initiates a complex process that seals the wound with a clot.

Ecosystems: An Organism's Interactions with Other Organisms and the Physical Environment

At the ecosystem level, every organism interacts with other organisms. For instance, an acacia tree interacts with soil microorganisms associated

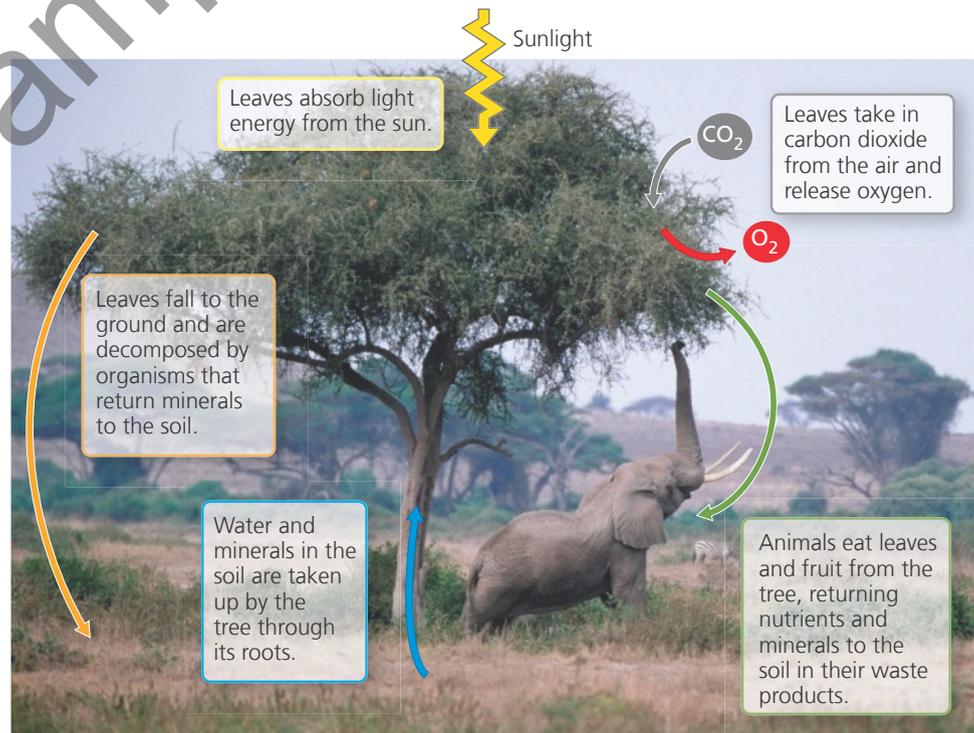
▼ **Figure 1.10 Feedback regulation.** The human body regulates use and storage of glucose, a major cellular fuel. This figure shows negative feedback: The response to insulin reduces the initial stimulus.



VISUAL SKILLS ► In this example, what is the response to insulin? What is the initial stimulus that is reduced by the response?

with its roots, insects that live on it, and animals that eat its leaves and fruit (**Figure 1.11**). Interactions between organisms include those that are mutually beneficial (as when “cleaner fish” eat small parasites on a turtle), and those in which one species benefits and the other is harmed (as when a lion kills and eats a zebra). In some interactions between species, both are harmed—for example, when two plants compete for a soil resource that is in short supply.

▼ **Figure 1.11 Interactions of an African acacia tree with other organisms and the physical environment.**



Interactions among organisms help regulate the functioning of the ecosystem as a whole.

Each organism also interacts continuously with physical factors in its environment. The leaves of a tree, for example, absorb light from the sun, take in CO₂ from the air, and release oxygen to the air (see Figure 1.11). The environment is also affected by organisms. For instance, in addition to taking up water and minerals from the soil, the roots of a plant break up rocks as they grow, contributing to the formation of soil. On a global scale, plants and other photosynthetic organisms have generated all the oxygen in the atmosphere.

Like other organisms, we humans interact with our environment. Our interactions sometimes have dire consequences: For example, over the past 150 years, humans have greatly increased the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil, and gas). This practice releases large amounts of CO₂ and other gases into the atmosphere, causing heat to be trapped close to the Earth's surface (see Figure 56.29). Scientists calculate that the CO₂ that human activities have added to the atmosphere has increased the average temperature of the planet by about 1°C since 1900. At the current rates that CO₂ and other gases are being added to the atmosphere, global models predict an additional rise of at least 3°C before the end of this century.

This ongoing global warming is a major aspect of **climate change**, a directional change to the global climate that lasts for three decades or more (as opposed to short-term changes in the weather). But global warming is not the only way the climate is changing: Wind and precipitation patterns are also shifting, and extreme weather events such as storms and droughts are occurring more often. Climate change has already affected organisms and their habitats all over the planet. For example, polar bears have lost much of the ice platform from which they hunt, leading to food shortages and increased mortality rates. As habitats deteriorate, hundreds of plant and animal species are shifting their ranges to more suitable locations—but for some, there is insufficient suitable habitat, or they may not be able to migrate quickly enough. As a result, the populations of many species are shrinking in size or even disappearing (Figure 1.12). This

► **Figure 1.12 Threatened by global warming.** A warmer environment causes lizards in the genus *Sceloporus* to spend more time in refuge from the heat, reducing time for foraging. Their food intake drops, decreasing reproductive success. Surveys show that 12% of the 200 populations in Mexico have disappeared since 1975. For more examples of climate change affecting life on Earth, see Make Connections Figure 56.31.



trend can result in extinction, the permanent loss of a species. As we'll discuss in greater detail in Concept 56.4, the consequences of these changes for humans and other organisms may be profound.

Having considered four of the unifying themes (organisation, information, energy and matter, and interactions), let's now turn to evolution. There is consensus among biologists that evolution is the core theme of biology, and it is discussed in detail in the next section.

CONCEPT CHECK 1.1

1. Starting with the molecular level in Figure 1.3, write a sentence that includes components from the previous (lower) level of biological organisation, for example: "A molecule consists of *atoms* bonded together." Continue with organelles, moving up the biological hierarchy.
2. Identify the theme or themes exemplified by (a) the sharp quills of an echidna, (b) the development of a multicellular organism from a single fertilised egg, and (c) a cockatoo eating fruits and seeds to power its flight.
3. **WHAT IF? >** For each theme discussed in this section, give an example not mentioned in the text.

For suggested answers, see Appendix A.

CONCEPT 1.2

The Core Theme: Evolution accounts for the unity and diversity of life

EVOLUTION Evolution is the one idea that makes logical sense of everything we know about living organisms. As the fossil record clearly shows, life has been evolving on Earth for billions of years, resulting in a vast diversity of past and present organisms. But along with the diversity there is also unity, in the form of shared features. For example, while sea horses, bilbies, honey possums, and giraffes all look very different, their skeletons are organised in the same basic way.

The scientific explanation for the unity and diversity of organisms—as well as for the adaptation of organisms to their particular environments—is **evolution**: the concept that the organisms living on Earth today are the modified descendants of common ancestors. As a result of descent with modification, two species share certain traits (unity) simply because they have descended from a common ancestor. Furthermore, we can account for differences between two species (diversity) with the idea that certain heritable changes occurred after the two species diverged from their common ancestor. An abundance of evidence of different types supports the occurrence of evolution and the theory that describes how it takes place, which we'll discuss in detail in Chapters 22–25. To quote one of the founders of modern evolutionary theory, Theodosius Dobzhansky, "Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution." To understand Dobzhansky's statement, we need to discuss how biologists think about the vast diversity of life on the planet.

Classifying the Diversity of Life

Diversity is a hallmark of life. Biologists have so far identified and named about 1.8 million species of organisms. Each species is given a two-part name: The first part is the name of the genus (plural, *genera*) to which the species belongs, and the second part is unique to the species within the genus. (For example, *Homo sapiens* is the name of our species.)

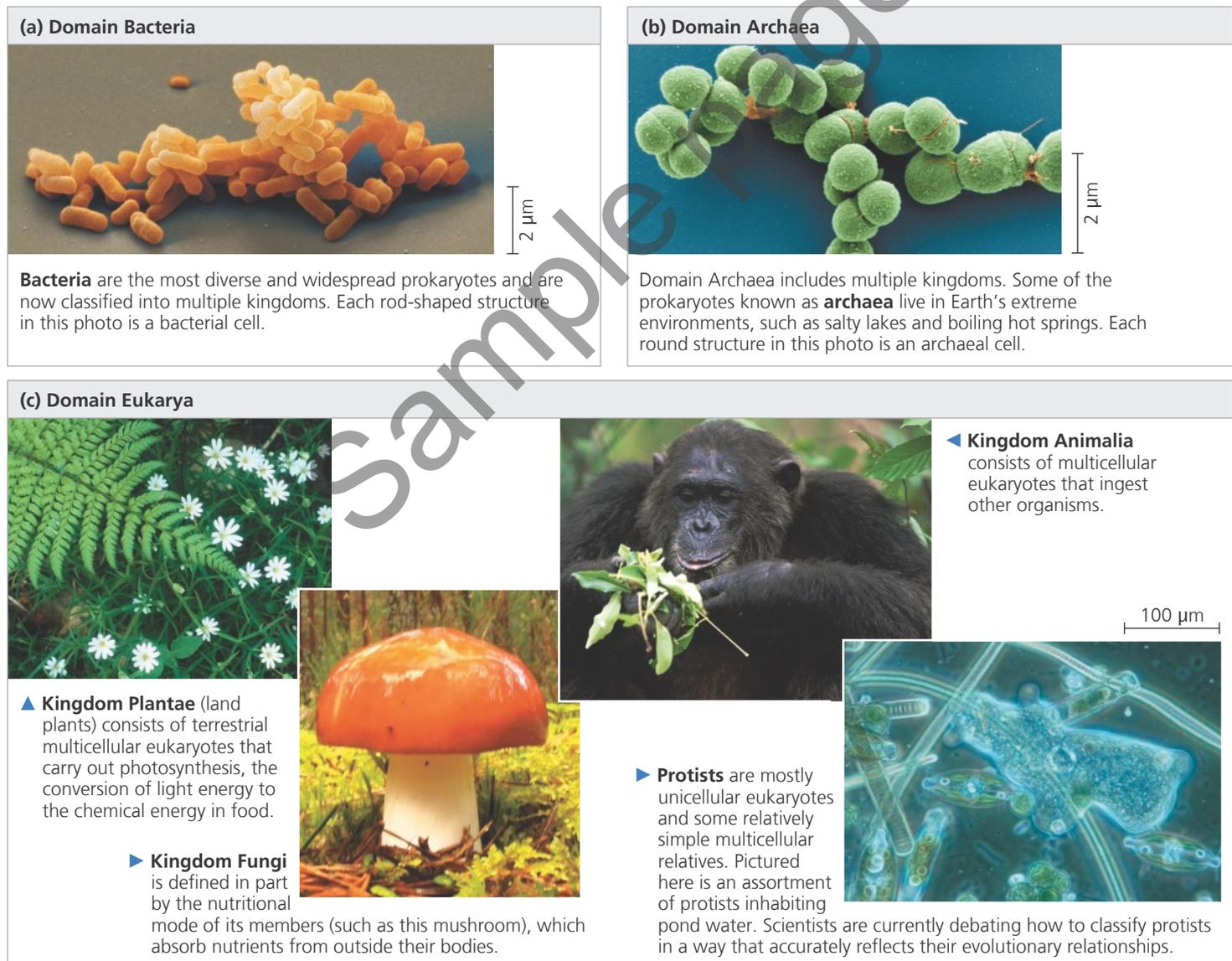
To date, known species include at least 100,000 species of fungi, 290,000 plant species, 57,000 vertebrate species (animals with backbones), and 1 million insect species (more than half of all known forms of life)—not to mention the myriad types of single-celled organisms. Researchers identify thousands of additional species each year. Estimates of the total number of species range from about 10 million to over 100 million. Whatever the actual number, the enormous variety of life gives biology a very broad scope. Biologists face a major challenge in attempting to make sense of this variety.

The Three Domains of Life

Historically, scientists have classified the diversity of life-forms into species and broader groupings by careful comparisons of structure, function, and other obvious features. In the last few decades, new methods of assessing species relationships, such as comparisons of DNA sequences, have led to a reevaluation of the classification of life. Although this reevaluation is ongoing, biologists currently divide all organisms into three groups called domains: Bacteria, Archaea, and Eukarya (**Figure 1.13**).

The organisms making up two of the three domains—**Bacteria** and **Archaea**—are prokaryotic. All the eukaryotes (organisms with eukaryotic cells) are in domain **Eukarya**. This domain includes four subgroups: kingdom Plantae, kingdom Fungi, kingdom Animalia, and the protists. The three kingdoms are distinguished partly by their modes of nutrition: Plants produce their own sugars and other food molecules by photosynthesis, fungi absorb nutrients in

▼ **Figure 1.13** The three domains of life.



dissolved form from their surroundings, and animals obtain food by eating and digesting other organisms. Animalia is, of course, the kingdom to which we belong.

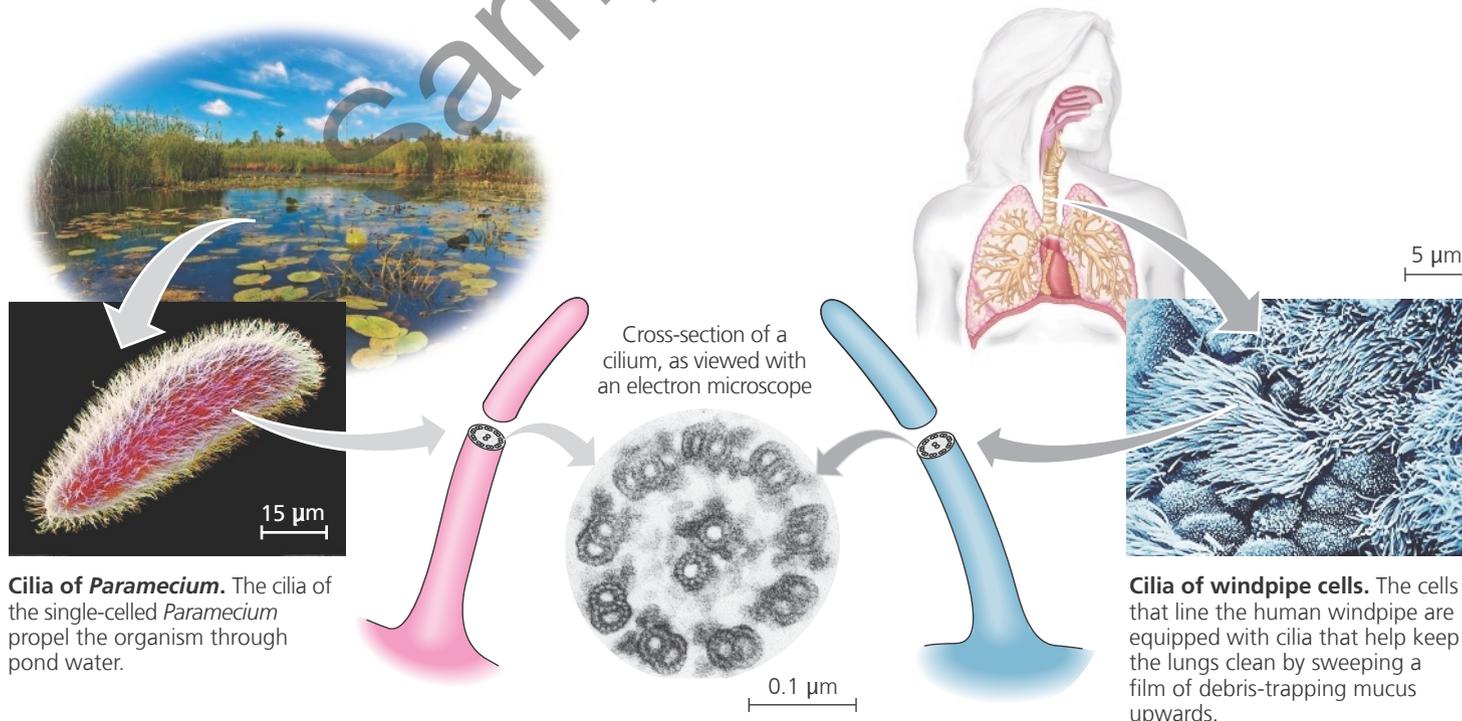
The most numerous and diverse eukaryotes are the protists, which are mostly single-celled organisms. Although protists were once placed in a single kingdom, they are now classified into several groups. One major reason for this change is the recent DNA evidence showing that some protists are less closely related to other protists than they are to plants, animals, or fungi.

Unity in the Diversity of Life

As diverse as life is, it also displays remarkable unity. Consider, for example, the similar skeletons of different animals and the universal genetic language of DNA (the genetic code), both mentioned earlier. In fact, similarities between organisms are evident at all levels of the biological hierarchy. For example, unity is obvious in many features of cell structure, even among distantly related organisms (Figure 1.14).

How can we account for life's dual nature of unity and diversity? The process of evolution, explained next, illuminates both the similarities and the differences in the world of life. It also introduces another important dimension of biology: the passage of time. The history of life, as

▼ **Figure 1.14 An example of unity underlying the diversity of life: the architecture of cilia in eukaryotes.** Cilia (singular, *cilium*) are extensions of cells that function in locomotion. They occur in eukaryotes as diverse as *Paramecium* (found in pond water) and humans. Even organisms so different share a common architecture for their cilia, which have an elaborate system of tubules that is striking in cross-sectional views.

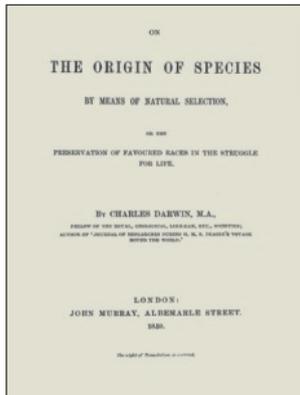


documented by fossils and other evidence, is the saga of a changing Earth billions of years old, inhabited by an evolving cast of living forms (Figure 1.15).

▼ **Figure 1.15 Digging into the past.** Paleontologists carefully excavate the hind leg of a long-necked dinosaur (*Rapetosaurus krausei*) from rocks in Madagascar.



▼ **Figure 1.16 Charles Darwin as a young man.** His revolutionary book *On the Origin of Species* was first published in 1859.



Charles Darwin and the Theory of Natural Selection

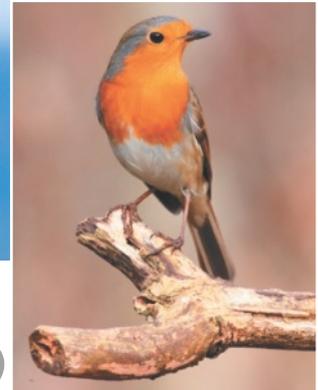
An evolutionary view of life came into sharp focus in November 1859, when Charles Darwin published one of the most important and influential books ever written, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (Figure 1.16). *The Origin of Species* articulated two main points. The first point was that contemporary species arose from a succession of ancestors that differed from them. Darwin called this process “descent with modification.” This insightful phrase captured the duality of life’s unity and diversity—unity in the kinship among species that descended from common ancestors and diversity in the modifications that evolved as species branched from their common ancestors (Figure 1.17). Darwin’s second main point was his proposal that “natural selection” is a primary cause of descent with modification.

Darwin developed his theory of natural selection from observations that by themselves were neither new nor profound. However, although others had described the pieces of the puzzle, it was Darwin who saw how they fit together. He started with the following three observations from nature: First, individuals in a population vary in their traits, many of which seem to be heritable (passed on from parents to offspring). Second, a population can produce far more offspring than can survive to produce offspring of their own. With more individuals than the environment is able to support, competition is inevitable. Third, species generally are suited to their environments—in other words, they are adapted to their circumstances. For instance, a common adaptation among birds that eat mostly hard seeds is an especially strong beak.

By making inferences from these three observations, Darwin arrived at his theory of evolution. He reasoned that individuals

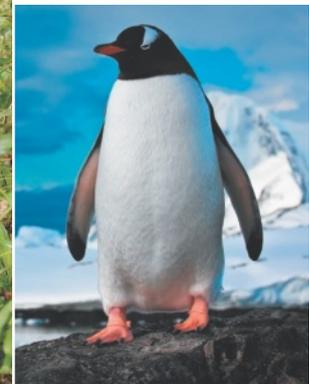
▼ **Figure 1.17 Unity and diversity among birds.** These four birds are variations on a common body plan. For example, each has feathers, a beak, and wings. However, these common features are highly specialised for the birds’ diverse lifestyles.

▼ **Red-shouldered hawk**



▲ **European robin**

▼ **Cassowary**

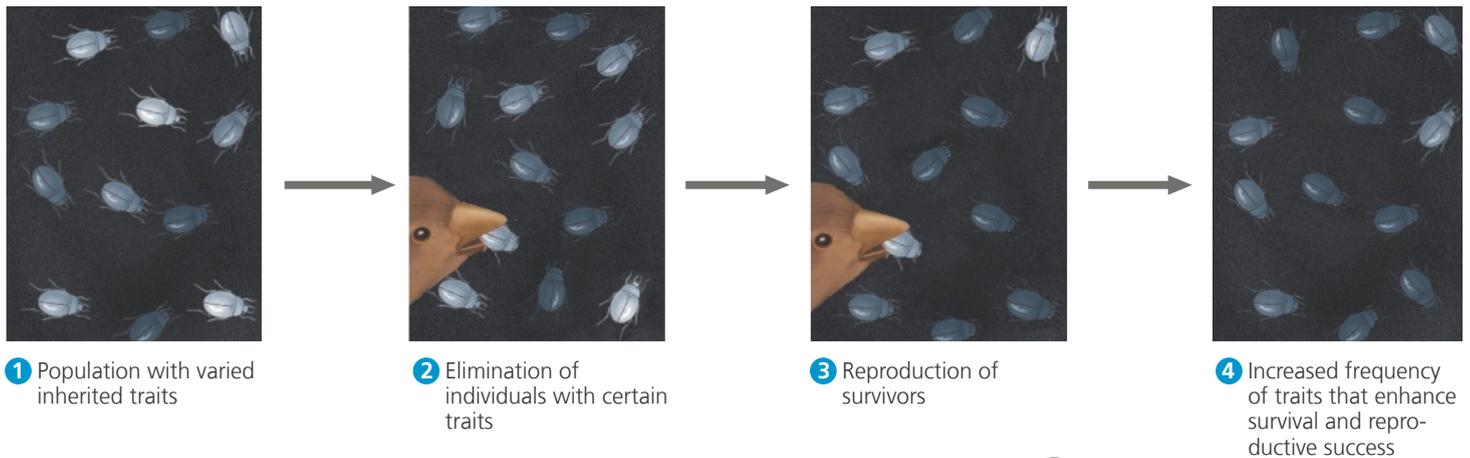


▲ **Gentoo penguin**

with inherited traits that are better suited to the local environment are more likely to survive and reproduce than less well-suited individuals. Over many generations, a higher and higher proportion of individuals in a population will have the advantageous traits. Evolution occurs as the unequal reproductive success of individuals ultimately leads to adaptation to their environment, as long as the environment remains the same.

Darwin called this mechanism of evolutionary adaptation **natural selection** because the natural environment consistently “selects” for the propagation of certain traits among naturally occurring variant traits in the population. The example in Figure 1.18 illustrates the ability of natural selection to “edit” a population’s heritable variations in colour. We see the products of natural selection in the exquisite adaptations of various organisms to the special circumstances of their way of life and their environment. The wings of the bat shown in Figure 1.19 are an excellent example of adaptation.

▼ **Figure 1.18 Natural selection.** This imaginary beetle population has colonised a locale where the soil has been blackened by a recent bush fire. Initially, the population varies extensively in the inherited colouration of the individuals, from very light grey to charcoal. For hungry birds that prey on the beetles, it is easiest to spot the beetles that are lightest in colour.



DRAW IT ► Over time, the soil will gradually become lighter in colour. Draw another step to show how the soil, when lightened to medium colour, would affect natural selection. Write a caption for this new step. Then explain how the population would change over time as the soil becomes lighter.



The Tree of Life

Take another look at the skeletal architecture of the bat’s wings in Figure 1.19. These wings are not like those of feathered birds; the bat is a mammal. The bat’s forelimbs, though adapted for flight, actually have all the same bones, joints, nerves, and blood vessels found in other limbs as diverse as the human arm, the foreleg of a horse, and the flipper of a whale. Indeed, all mammalian forelimbs are anatomical variations of a common architecture. According to the Darwinian concept of descent with modification, the shared anatomy of mammalian limbs reflects inheritance of the limb structure from a common ancestor—the “prototype” mammal from which all other mammals descended. The diversity of mammalian forelimbs results from modification by natural

selection operating over millions of years in different environmental contexts. Fossils and other evidence corroborate anatomical unity in supporting this view of mammalian descent from a common ancestor.

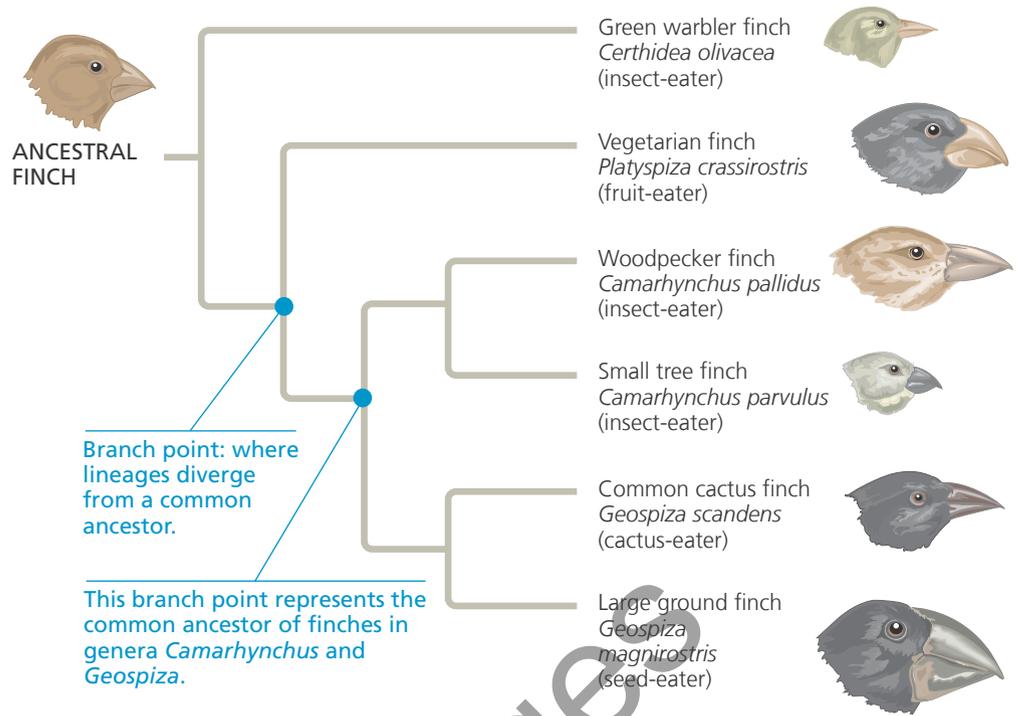
Darwin proposed that natural selection, by its cumulative effects over long periods of time, could cause an ancestral species to give rise to two or more descendant species. This could occur, for example, if one population fragmented into several subpopulations isolated in different environments. In these separate arenas of natural selection, one species could gradually radiate into multiple species as the geographically isolated populations adapted over many generations to different sets of environmental factors.

The Galápagos finches are a famous example of the process of radiation of new species from a common ancestor. Darwin collected specimens of these birds during his 1835 visit to the remote Galápagos Islands, 900 kilometres (km) off the Pacific coast of South America. These relatively young volcanic islands are home to many species of plants and animals found nowhere else in the world, though many Galápagos organisms are clearly related to species on the South American mainland. The Galápagos finches are believed to have descended from an ancestral finch species that reached the archipelago from South America or the Caribbean. Over time, the Galápagos finches diversified from their ancestor as populations became adapted to different food sources on their particular islands. Years after Darwin collected the finches, researchers began to sort out their evolutionary relationships, first from anatomical and geographic data and more recently with the help of DNA sequence comparisons.

Biologists’ diagrams of evolutionary relationships generally take treelike forms, though the trees are often turned sideways

► **Figure 1.20** Descent with modification: adaptive radiation of finches on the Galápagos Islands.

This “tree” illustrates a current model for the evolution of finches on the Galápagos. Note the different beaks, which are adapted to different food sources on the different islands. For example, heavier, thicker beaks are better at cracking seeds, while the more slender beaks are better at grasping insects.



as in **Figure 1.20**. Tree diagrams make sense: Just as an individual has a genealogy that can be diagrammed as a family tree, each species is one twig of a branching tree of life extending back in time through ancestral species more and more remote. Species that are very similar, such as the Galápagos finches, share a relatively recent common ancestor. Through an ancestor that lived much further back in time, finches are related to sparrows, hawks, penguins, and all other birds. Furthermore, finches and other birds are related to us through a common ancestor even more ancient. Trace life back far enough, and we reach the early prokaryotes that inhabited Earth more than 3.5 billion years ago. We can recognise their vestiges in our own cells—in the universal genetic code, for example. Indeed, all of life is connected through its long evolutionary history.

CONCEPT CHECK 1.2

1. Explain why “editing” is a metaphor for how natural selection acts on a population’s heritable variation.
2. Referring to Figure 1.20, provide a possible explanation for how, over a very long time, the green warbler finch came to have a slender beak.
3. **DRAW IT** ► The three domains you learned about in Concept 1.2 can be represented in the tree of life as the three main branches, with three subbranches on the eukaryotic branch being the kingdoms Plantae, Fungi, and Animalia. What if fungi and animals are more closely related to each other than either of these kingdoms is to plants—as recent evidence strongly suggests? Draw a simple branching pattern that symbolises the proposed relationship between these three eukaryotic kingdoms.

For suggested answers, see Appendix A.

CONCEPT 1.3

In studying nature, scientists make observations and form and test hypotheses

Science is a way of knowing—an approach to understanding the natural world. It developed out of our curiosity about ourselves, other life-forms, our planet, and the universe. The word *science* is derived from a Latin verb meaning “to know.” Striving to understand seems to be one of our basic urges.

At the heart of science is **inquiry**, a search for information and explanations of natural phenomena. There is no formula for successful scientific inquiry, no single scientific method that researchers must rigidly follow. As in all quests, science includes elements of challenge, adventure, and luck, along with careful planning, reasoning, creativity, patience, and the persistence to overcome setbacks. Such diverse elements of inquiry make science far less structured than most people realise. That said, it is possible to highlight certain characteristics that help to distinguish science from other ways of describing and explaining nature.

Scientists use a process of inquiry that includes making observations, forming logical, testable explanations (*hypotheses*), and testing them. The process is necessarily repetitive: In testing a hypothesis, more observations may inspire revision of the original hypothesis or formation of a new one, thus leading to further testing. In this way,

scientists circle closer and closer to their best estimation of the laws governing nature.

Exploration and Observation

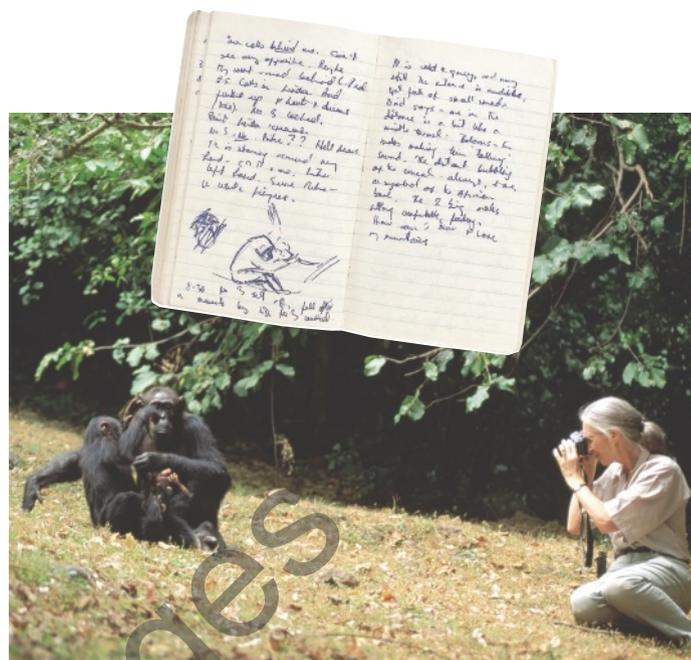
Our innate curiosity often stimulates us to pose questions about the natural basis for the phenomena we observe in the world. For example, what causes the roots of a plant seedling to grow downwards? In fine-tuning their questions, biologists rely heavily on the scientific literature, the published contributions of fellow scientists. By reading about and understanding past studies, scientists can build on the foundation of existing knowledge, focusing their investigations on observations that are original and on hypotheses that are consistent with previous findings. Identifying publications relevant to a new line of research is now easier than at any point in the past, thanks to indexed and searchable electronic databases.

In the course of their work, biologists make careful observations. In gathering information, they often use tools such as microscopes, precision thermometers, or high-speed cameras that extend their senses or facilitate careful measurement. Observations can reveal valuable information about the natural world. For example, a series of detailed observations have shaped our understanding of cell structure, and another set of observations is currently expanding our databases of genome sequences from diverse species and databases of genes whose expression is altered in various diseases.

Recorded observations are called **data**. Put another way, data are items of information on which scientific inquiry is based. The term *data* implies numbers to many people. But some data are *qualitative*, often in the form of recorded descriptions rather than numerical measurements. For example, Jane Goodall spent decades recording her observations of chimpanzee behaviour during field research in a Tanzanian jungle (Figure 1.21). In her studies, Goodall also enriched the field of animal behaviour with volumes of *quantitative* data, such as the frequency and duration of specific behaviours for different members of a group of chimpanzees in a variety of situations. Quantitative data are generally expressed as numerical measurements and often organised into tables and graphs. Scientists analyse their data using a type of mathematics called *statistics* to test whether their results are significant or merely due to random fluctuations. All results presented in this text have been shown to be statistically significant.

Collecting and analysing observations can lead to important conclusions based on a type of logic called **inductive reasoning**. Through induction, we derive generalisations from a large number of specific observations. “The sun always rises in the east” is an example. And so is “All organisms are

▼ **Figure 1.21 Jane Goodall collecting qualitative data on chimpanzee behaviour.** Goodall recorded her observations in field notebooks, often with sketches of the animals’ behaviour.



made of cells.” Careful observations and data analyses, along with generalisations reached by induction, are fundamental to our understanding of nature.

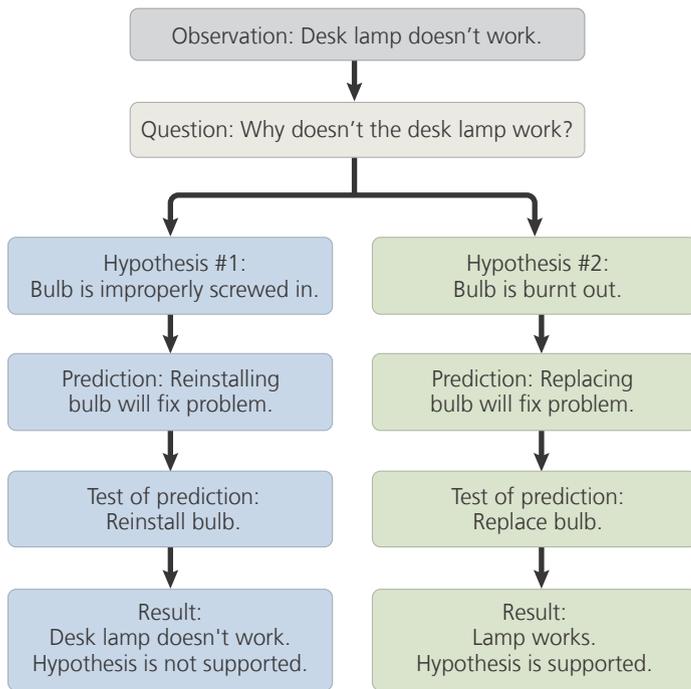
Forming and Testing Hypotheses

After carrying out preliminary observations and collecting and analysing data, scientists begin to form tentative answers to their original questions and to test their hypothetical explanations—that is, their hypotheses. In science, a **hypothesis** is an explanation, based on observations and assumptions, that leads to a testable prediction. Said another way, a hypothesis is an explanation on trial. The hypothesis is usually a rational accounting for a set of observations, based on the available data and guided by inductive reasoning. A scientific hypothesis must lead to predictions that can be tested by making additional observations or by performing experiments. An **experiment** is a scientific test, carried out under controlled conditions.

We all make observations and develop questions and hypotheses in solving everyday problems. Let’s say, for example, that your desk lamp is plugged in and turned on but the bulb isn’t lit. That’s an observation. The question is obvious: Why doesn’t the lamp work? Two reasonable hypotheses based on your experience are that (1) the bulb is not screwed in properly or (2) the bulb is burnt out. Each of these alternative hypotheses leads to predictions you can test with experiments. For example, the improperly screwed-in

▼ **Figure 1.22 A simplified view of the scientific process.**

The idealised process sometimes called the “scientific method” is shown in this flow chart, which illustrates hypothesis testing for a desk lamp that doesn’t work.



bulb hypothesis predicts that carefully reinstalling the bulb will fix the problem. **Figure 1.22** diagrams this informal inquiry. Figuring things out in this way by trial and error is a hypothesis-based approach.

Deductive Reasoning

A type of logic called deduction is also built into the use of hypotheses in science. While induction entails reasoning from a set of specific observations to reach a general conclusion, **deductive reasoning** involves logic that flows in the opposite direction, from the general to the specific. From general premises, we extrapolate to the specific results we should expect if the premises are true. In the scientific process, deductions usually take the form of predictions of results that will be found if a particular hypothesis (premise) is correct. We then test the hypothesis by carrying out experiments or observations to see whether or not the results are as predicted. This deductive testing takes the form of “If... then” logic. In the case of the desk lamp example: *If* the burnt-out bulb hypothesis is correct, *then* the lamp should work if you replace the bulb with a new one.

We can use the desk lamp example to illustrate two other key points about the use of hypotheses in science. First, one can always devise additional hypotheses to explain a set of observations. For instance, another hypothesis to explain our nonworking desk lamp is that

the power point is broken. Although you could design an experiment to test this hypothesis, you can never test all possible hypotheses. Second, we can never *prove* that a hypothesis is true. Based on the experiments shown in Figure 1.22, the burnt-out bulb hypothesis is the most likely explanation, but testing supports that hypothesis *not* by proving that it is correct, but rather by failing to prove that it is incorrect. For example, even if replacing the bulb fixed the desk lamp, it might have been because there was a temporary power outage that just happened to end while the bulb was being changed.

Although a hypothesis can never be proved beyond the shadow of a doubt, testing it in various ways can significantly increase our confidence in its validity. Often, rounds of hypothesis formulation and testing lead to a scientific consensus—the shared conclusion of many scientists that a particular hypothesis explains the known data well and stands up to experimental testing.

Questions That Can and Cannot Be Addressed by Science

Scientific inquiry is a powerful way to learn about nature, but there are limitations to the kinds of questions it can answer. A scientific hypothesis must be *testable*; there must be some observation or experiment that could reveal if such an idea is likely to be true or false. The hypothesis that a burnt-out bulb is the sole reason the lamp doesn’t work would not be supported if replacing the bulb with a new one didn’t fix the lamp.

Not all hypotheses meet the criteria of science: You wouldn’t be able to test the hypothesis that invisible ghosts are fooling with your desk lamp! Because science deals only with natural, testable explanations for natural phenomena, it can neither support nor contradict the invisible ghost hypothesis, nor whether spirits or elves cause storms, rainbows, or illnesses. Such supernatural explanations are simply outside the bounds of science, as are religious matters, which are issues of personal faith. Science and religion are not mutually exclusive or contradictory; they are simply concerned with different issues.

The Flexibility of the Scientific Process

The desk lamp example of Figure 1.22 traces an idealised process of inquiry sometimes called the *scientific method*. However, very few scientific inquiries adhere rigidly to the sequence of steps that are typically used to describe this approach. For example, a scientist may start to design an experiment, but then backtrack after realising that more preliminary observations are necessary. In other cases, observations remain too puzzling to prompt well-defined questions until further study provides a new context in which to view those observations. For example, scientists could not

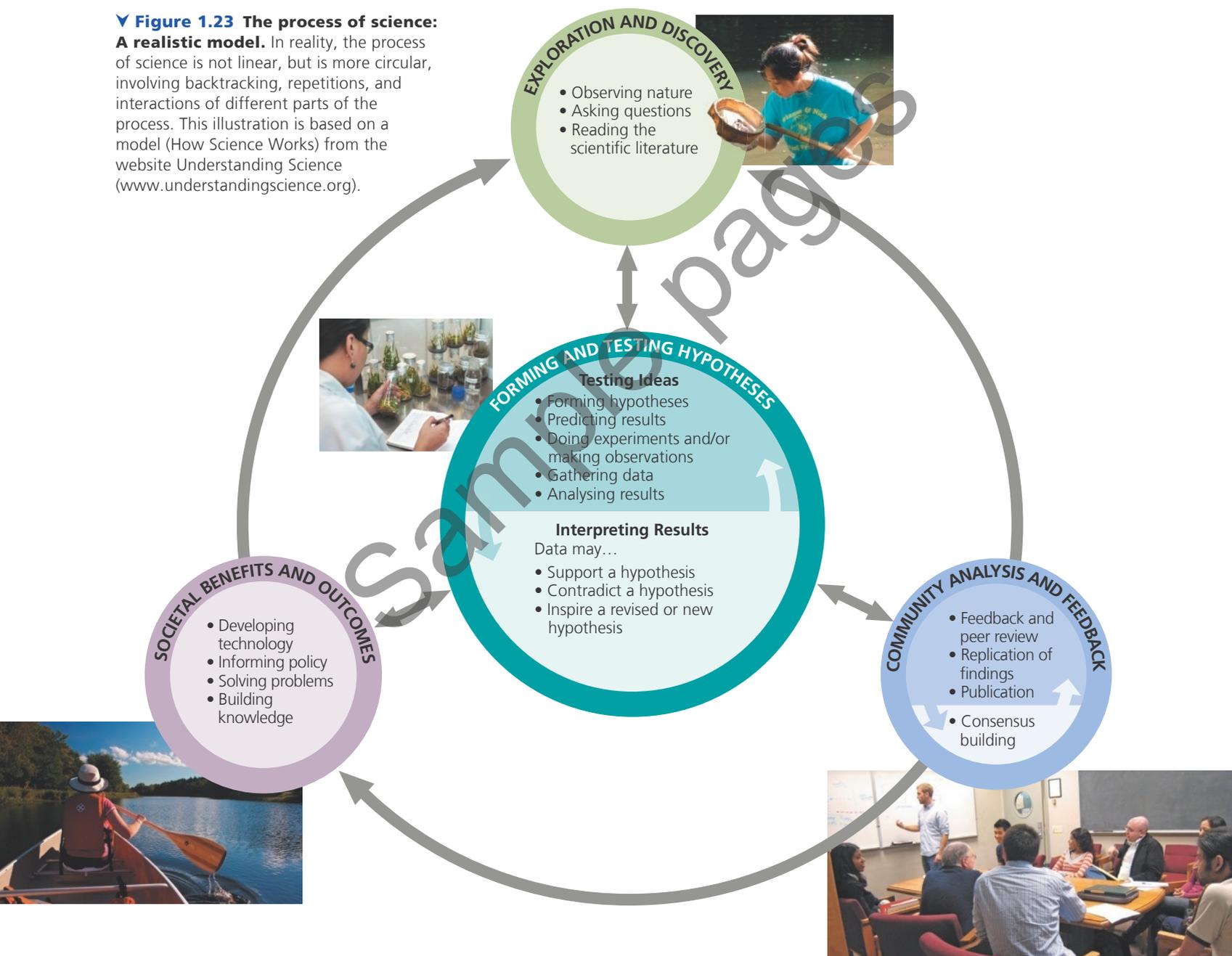
unravel the details of how genes encode proteins until *after* the discovery of the structure of DNA (an event that took place in 1953).

A more realistic model of the scientific process is shown in **Figure 1.23**. The focus of this model, shown in the central circle in the figure, is the forming and testing of hypotheses. This core set of activities is the reason that science does so well in explaining phenomena in the natural world. These activities, however, are shaped by exploration and discovery (the upper circle in Figure 1.23) and influenced by interactions with other scientists and with society more

generally (lower circles). For example, the community of scientists influences which hypotheses are tested, how test results are interpreted, and what value is placed on the findings. Similarly, societal needs—such as the push to cure cancer or understand the process of climate change—may help shape what research projects are funded and how extensively the results are discussed.

Now that we have highlighted the key features of scientific inquiry—making observations and forming and testing hypotheses—you should be able to recognise these features in a case study of actual scientific research.

▼ Figure 1.23 The process of science: A realistic model. In reality, the process of science is not linear, but is more circular, involving backtracking, repetitions, and interactions of different parts of the process. This illustration is based on a model (How Science Works) from the website Understanding Science (www.understandingscience.org).



A Case Study in Scientific Inquiry: Investigating Coat Colouration in Mouse Populations

Our case study begins with a set of observations and inductive generalisations. Colour patterns of animals vary widely in nature, sometimes even among members of the same species. What accounts for such variation? An illustrative example can be found in two mice populations that are members of the same species (*Peromyscus polionotus*) but have different colour patterns and reside in different environments. One, the beach mouse, lives along the Florida seashore, a habitat of brilliant white sand dunes with sparse clumps of beach grass. The other, the inland mouse, lives on darker, more fertile soil further inland (Figure 1.24). Even a brief glance at the photographs in Figure 1.24 reveals a striking match of mouse colouration to its habitat. The natural predators of these mice, including hawks, owls, foxes, and coyotes, are all visual hunters (they use their eyes to look for prey). It was logical, therefore, for Francis Bertody Sumner, a naturalist studying populations of these mice in the 1920s, to form the hypothesis that their colouration patterns had evolved as adaptations that camouflage the mice in their native environments, protecting them from predation.

As obvious as the camouflage hypothesis may seem, it still required testing. In 2010, biologist Hopi Hoekstra of Harvard University and a group of her students headed to Florida to test the prediction that mice with colouration that did not match their habitat would be preyed on more heavily than the native, well-matched mice. Figure 1.25 summarises this field experiment.

The researchers built hundreds of models of mice and spray-painted them to resemble either beach or inland mice, so that

the models differed only in their colour patterns. The researchers placed equal numbers of these model mice randomly in both habitats and left them overnight. The mouse models resembling the native mice in the habitat were the *control* group (for instance, light-coloured mouse models in the beach habitat), while the mouse models with the non-native colouration were the *experimental* group (for example, darker models in the beach habitat). The following morning, the team counted and recorded signs of predation events, which ranged from bites and gouge marks on some models to the outright disappearance of others. Judging by the shape of the predators' bites and the tracks surrounding the experimental sites, the predators appeared to be split fairly evenly between mammals (such as foxes and coyotes) and birds (such as owls, herons, and hawks).

For each environment, the researchers then calculated the percentage of predation events that targeted camouflaged models. The results were clear-cut: Camouflaged models showed much lower predation rates than those lacking camouflage in both the beach habitat (where light mice were less vulnerable) and the inland habitat (where dark mice were less vulnerable). The data thus fit the key prediction of the camouflage hypothesis.

Experimental Variables and Controls

In carrying out an experiment, a researcher often manipulates one factor in a system and observes the effects of this change. The mouse camouflage experiment described in Figure 1.25 is an example of a **controlled experiment**, one that is designed to compare an experimental group (the non-camouflaged mice models, in this case) with a control group (the camouflaged models). Both the factor that is manipulated and the factor that is subsequently measured are types of experimental **variables**—a feature or quantity that varies in

▼ Figure 1.24 Different colouration in beach and inland populations of *Peromyscus polionotus*.



Beach mice living on sparsely vegetated sand dunes along the coast have light tan, dappled fur on their backs that allows them to blend into their surroundings, providing camouflage.

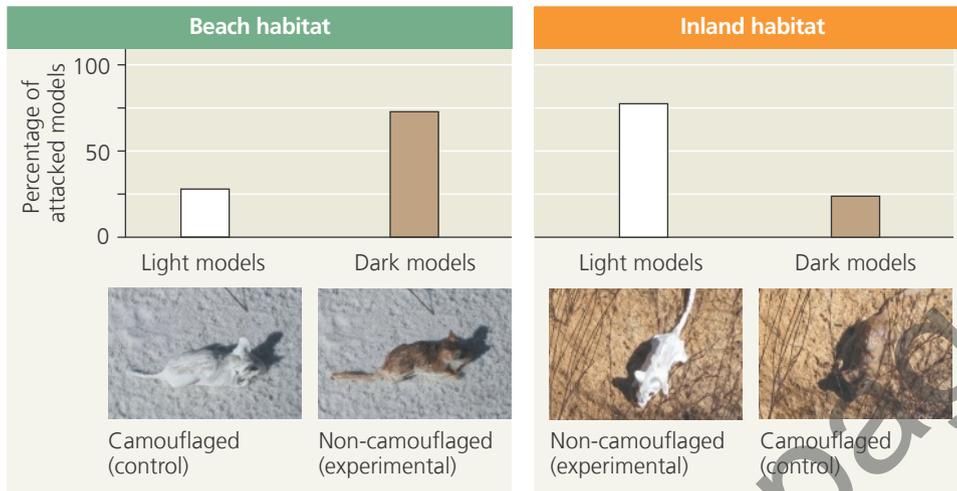
Members of the same species living about 30 km inland have dark fur on their backs, camouflaging them against the dark ground of their habitat.

▼ Figure 1.25

Inquiry Does camouflage affect predation rates on two populations of mice?

Experiment Hopi Hoekstra and colleagues tested the hypothesis that coat colouration provides camouflage that protects beach and inland populations of *Peromyscus polionotus* mice from predation in their habitats. The researchers spray-painted mouse models with light or dark colour patterns that matched those of the beach and inland mice and placed models with each of the patterns in both habitats. The next morning, they counted damaged or missing models.

Results For each habitat, the researchers calculated the percentage of attacked models that were camouflaged or non-camouflaged. In both habitats, the models whose pattern did not match their surroundings suffered much higher “predation” than did the camouflaged models.



Conclusion The results are consistent with the researchers’ prediction: that mouse models with camouflage colouration would be preyed on less often than non-camouflaged mouse models. Thus, the experiment supports the camouflage hypothesis.

Data from S. N. Vignieri, J. G. Larson, and H. E. Hoekstra, The selective advantage of crypsis in mice, *Evolution* 64:2153–2158 (2010).

INTERPRET THE DATA ▶ The bars indicate the percentage of the attacked models that were either light or dark. Assume 100 mouse models were attacked in each habitat. For the beach habitat, how many were light models? Dark models? Answer the same questions for the inland habitat.

an experiment. In our example, the colour of the mouse model was the **independent variable**—the factor being manipulated by the researchers. The **dependent variable** is the factor being measured that is predicted to be affected by the independent variable; in this case, the researchers measured the predation rate in response to variation in colour of the mouse model. Ideally, the experimental and control groups differ in only one independent variable—in the mouse experiment, colour.

Without the control group, the researchers would not have been able to rule out other factors as causes of the more frequent attacks on the non-camouflaged mice—such as different numbers of predators or different temperatures in the different test areas. The clever experimental design left colouration as the only factor that could account for the low predation rate on models camouflaged with respect to the surrounding environment.

A common misconception is that the term *controlled experiment* means that scientists control all features of the experimental environment. But that’s impossible in field research and can be very difficult even in highly regulated laboratory environments. Researchers usually “control” unwanted variables not by *eliminating* them through environmental regulation, but by *canceling out* their effects by using control groups.

Theories in Science

“It’s just a theory!” Our everyday use of the term *theory* often implies an untested speculation. But the term *theory* has a different meaning in science. What is a scientific theory, and how is it different from a hypothesis or from mere speculation?

First, a scientific **theory** is much broader in scope than a hypothesis. *This* is a hypothesis: “Coat colouration well-matched to their habitat is an adaptation that protects mice from predators.” But *this* is a theory: “Evolutionary adaptations arise by natural selection.” This theory proposes that natural selection is the evolutionary mechanism that accounts for an enormous variety of adaptations, of which coat colour in mice is but one example.

Second, a theory is general enough to spin off many new, testable hypotheses. For example, the theory of natural selection motivated two researchers at Princeton University, Peter and Rosemary Grant, to test the specific hypothesis that the beaks of Galápagos finches evolve in response to changes in the types of available food. (Their results supported their hypothesis; see the introduction to Chapter 23.)

And third, compared to any one hypothesis, a theory is generally supported by a much greater body of evidence. The theory of natural selection has been supported by a vast quantity of evidence, with more being found every day, and has not been contradicted by any scientific data. Those theories that become widely adopted in science (such as the theory of natural selection and the theory of gravity) explain a great diversity of observations and are supported by a vast accumulation of evidence.

In spite of the body of evidence supporting a widely accepted theory, scientists will sometimes modify or even reject theories when new research produces results that don't fit. For example, biologists once lumped bacteria and archaea together as a kingdom of prokaryotes. When new methods for comparing cells and molecules could be used to test such relationships, the evidence led scientists to reject the theory that bacteria and archaea are members of the same kingdom. If there is "truth" in science, it is at best conditional, based on the weight of available evidence.

CONCEPT CHECK 1.3

1. What qualitative observation led to the quantitative study in Figure 1.25?
2. Contrast inductive reasoning with deductive reasoning.
3. Why is natural selection called a theory?
4. **WHAT IF? >** In the deserts of New Mexico, the soils are mostly sandy, with occasional regions of black rock derived from lava flows that occurred about 1,000 years ago. Mice are found in both sandy and rocky areas, and owls are known predators. What might you expect about coat colour in these two mouse populations? Explain. How would you use this ecosystem to further test the camouflage hypothesis?

For suggested answers, see Appendix A.

CONCEPT 1.4

Science benefits from a cooperative approach and diverse viewpoints

Movies and cartoons sometimes portray scientists as loners in white lab coats, working in isolated labs. In reality, science is an intensely social activity. Most scientists work in teams, which often include both graduate and undergraduate students. And to succeed in science, it helps to be a good communicator. Research results have no impact until shared with a community of peers through seminars, publications, and websites. And, in fact, research papers aren't published until they are vetted by colleagues in what is called the "peer review" process. The examples of scientific inquiry described in this book, for instance, have all been published in peer-reviewed journals.

Building on the Work of Others

The great scientist Isaac Newton once said: "To explain all nature is too difficult a task for any one man or even for any one age. 'Tis much better to do a little with certainty, and leave the rest for others that come after you ..." Anyone who becomes a scientist, driven by curiosity about how nature works, is sure to benefit greatly from the rich storehouse of discoveries by others who have come before. In fact, Hopi Hoekstra's experiment benefited from the work of another

researcher, D. W. Kaufman, 40 years earlier. You can study the design of Kaufman's experiment and interpret the results in the **Scientific Skills Exercise**.

Scientific results are continually scrutinised through the repetition of observations and experiments. Scientists working in the same research field often check one another's claims by attempting to confirm observations or repeat experiments. If scientific colleagues cannot repeat experimental findings, this failure may reflect some underlying weakness in the original claim, which will then have to be revised. In this sense, science polices itself. Integrity and adherence to high professional standards in reporting results are central to the scientific endeavour, since the validity of experimental data is key to designing further lines of inquiry.

It is not unusual for several scientists to converge on the same research question. Some scientists enjoy the challenge of being first with an important discovery or key experiment, while others derive more satisfaction from cooperating with fellow scientists working on the same problem.

Cooperation is facilitated when scientists use the same organism. Often it is a widely used **model organism**—a species that is easy to grow in the lab and lends itself particularly well to the questions being investigated. Because all species are evolutionarily related, such an organism may be viewed as a model for understanding the biology of other species and their diseases. For example, genetic studies of the fruit fly *Drosophila melanogaster* have taught us a lot about how genes work in other species, even humans. Some other popular model organisms are the mustard plant *Arabidopsis thaliana*, the soil worm *Caenorhabditis elegans*, the zebrafish *Danio rerio*, the mouse *Mus musculus*, and the bacterium *Escherichia coli*. As you read through this book, note the many contributions that these and other model organisms have made to the study of life.

Biologists may approach interesting questions from different angles. Some biologists focus on ecosystems, while others study natural phenomena at the level of organisms or cells. This text is divided into units that look at biology at different levels and investigate problems through different approaches. Yet any given problem can be addressed from many perspectives, which in fact complement each other. For example, Hoekstra's work uncovered at least one genetic mutation that underlies the differences between beach and inland mouse colouration. Her lab includes biologists specialising in different biological levels, allowing links to be made between the evolutionary adaptations she focuses on and their molecular basis in DNA sequences.

As a biology student, you can benefit from making connections between the different levels of biology. You can develop this skill by noticing when certain topics crop up again and again in different units. One such topic is sickle-cell disease, a well-understood genetic condition that is prevalent among native inhabitants of Africa and other warm regions and their

SCIENTIFIC SKILLS EXERCISE

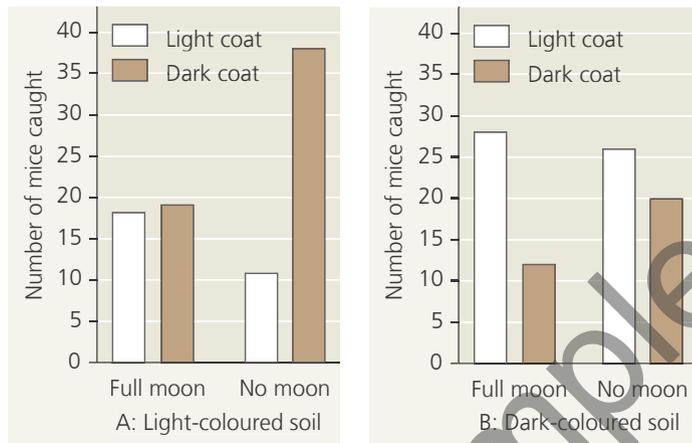
Interpreting a Pair of Bar Graphs

How Much Does Camouflage Affect Predation on Mice by Owls With and Without Moonlight?

D. W. Kaufman hypothesised that the extent to which the coat colour of a mouse contrasted with the colour of its surroundings would affect the rate of nighttime predation by owls. He also hypothesised that the contrast would be affected by the amount of moonlight. In this exercise, you will analyse data from his studies of owl predation on mice that tested these hypotheses.

How the Experiment Was Done Pairs of mice (*Peromyscus polionotus*) with different coat colours, one light brown and one dark brown, were released simultaneously into an enclosure that contained a hungry owl. The researcher recorded the colour of the mouse that was first caught by the owl. If the owl did not catch either mouse within 15 minutes, the test was recorded as a zero. The release trials were repeated multiple times in enclosures with either a dark-coloured soil surface or a light-coloured soil surface. The presence or absence of moonlight during each assay was recorded.

Data from the Experiment



Data from D. W. Kaufman, Adaptive coloration in *Peromyscus polionotus*: Experimental selection by owls, *Journal of Mammalogy* 55:271–283 (1974).

INTERPRET THE DATA

1. First, make sure you understand how the graphs are set up. Graph A shows data from the light-coloured soil enclosure and graph B from the dark-coloured enclosure, but in all other respects the graphs are the same. (a) There is more than one independent variable in these graphs. What are the independent variables, the variables that were tested by the researcher? Which axis of the graphs has the independent variables? (b) What is the dependent variable, the response to the variables being tested? Which axis of the graphs has the dependent variable?
2. (a) How many dark-brown mice were caught in the light-coloured soil enclosure on a moonlit night? (b) How many dark-brown mice were caught in the dark-coloured soil enclosure on a moonlit night? (c) On a moonlit night, would a dark-brown mouse be more likely to escape predation by owls on dark- or light-coloured soil? Explain your answer.
3. (a) Is a dark-brown mouse on dark-coloured soil more likely to escape predation under a full moon or with no moon? (b) What about a light-brown mouse on light-coloured soil? Explain.
4. (a) Under which conditions would a dark-brown mouse be most likely to escape predation at night? (b) A light-brown mouse?
5. (a) What combination of independent variables led to the highest predation level in enclosures with light-coloured soil? (b) What combination of independent variables led to the highest predation level in enclosures with dark-coloured soil?
6. Thinking about your answers to question 5, provide a simple statement describing conditions that are especially deadly for either colour of mouse.
7. Combining the data from both graphs, estimate the number of mice caught in moonlight versus no-moonlight conditions. Which condition is optimal for predation by the owl? Explain.



Instructors: A version of this Scientific Skills Exercise can be assigned in MasteringBiology.

descendants. Sickle-cell disease will appear in several units of the text, each time addressed at a new level. In addition, we have designed a number of figures that make connections between the content in different chapters, as well as questions that ask you to make the connections yourselves. We hope these features will help you to integrate the material you're learning and enhance your enjoyment of biology by encouraging you to keep the big picture in mind.

Science, Technology, and Society

The research community is part of society at large, and the relationship of science to society becomes clearer when we add technology to the picture (see Figure 1.23). Though

science and technology sometimes employ similar inquiry patterns, their basic goals differ. The goal of science is to understand natural phenomena, while that of **technology** is to *apply* scientific knowledge for some specific purpose. Biologists and other scientists usually speak of “discoveries,” while engineers and other technologists more often speak of “inventions.” Because scientists put new technology to work in their research, science and technology are interdependent.

The potent combination of science and technology can have dramatic effects on society. Sometimes, the applications of basic research that turn out to be the most beneficial come out of the blue, from completely unanticipated observations in the course of scientific exploration. For example, discovery of the structure of DNA by Watson and

▼ Figure 1.26 DNA technology and forensics. In 2011, forensic analysis of DNA samples from a crime scene led to the release of Michael Morton from prison after he had served nearly 25 years for a crime he didn't commit, the brutal murder of his wife. The DNA analysis linked another man, also charged in a second murder, to the crime. The photo shows Mr Morton hugging his parents after his conviction was overturned. The details of forensic analysis of DNA are described in Chapter 20.



Crick 60 years ago and subsequent achievements in DNA science led to the technologies of DNA manipulation that are transforming applied fields such as medicine, agriculture, and forensics (Figure 1.26). Perhaps Watson and Crick envisioned that their discovery would someday lead to important applications, but it is unlikely that they could have predicted exactly what all those applications would be.

The directions that technology takes depend less on the curiosity that drives basic science than on the current needs and wants of people and on the social environment of the times. Debates about technology centre more on “should we do it” than “can we do it.” With advances in technology come difficult choices. For example, under what circumstances is it acceptable to use DNA technology to find out whether particular people have genes for hereditary diseases? Should such tests always be voluntary, or are there circumstances when genetic testing should be mandatory? Should insurance companies or employers have access to the information, as they do for many other types of personal health data? These questions are becoming much more urgent as the sequencing of individual genomes becomes quicker and cheaper.

Ethical issues raised by such questions have as much to do with politics, economics, and cultural values as with science and technology. All citizens—not only professional scientists—have a responsibility to be informed about how science works and about the potential benefits and risks of technology. The relationship between science, technology, and society increases the significance and value of any biology course.

The Value of Diverse Viewpoints in Science

Many of the technological innovations with the most profound impact on human society originated in settlements along trade routes, where a rich mix of different cultures ignited new ideas. For example, the printing press, which helped spread knowledge to all social classes, was invented by the German Johannes Gutenberg around 1440. This invention relied on several innovations from China, including paper and ink. Paper travelled along trade routes from China to Baghdad, where technology was developed for its mass production. This technology then migrated to Europe, as did water-based ink from China, which was modified by Gutenberg to become oil-based ink. We have the cross-fertilisation of diverse cultures to thank for the printing press, and the same can be said for other important inventions.

Along similar lines, science stands to gain much from embracing a diversity of backgrounds and viewpoints among its practitioners. But just how diverse a population are scientists in relation to gender, race, ethnicity, and other attributes?

The scientific community reflects the cultural standards and behaviours of the society around it. It is therefore not surprising that until recently, women and certain minorities have faced huge obstacles in their pursuit to become professional scientists in many countries around the world. Over the past 50 years, changing attitudes about career choices have increased the proportion of women in biology and some other sciences, so that now women constitute roughly half of undergraduate biology majors and biology PhD students.

The pace has been slow at higher levels in the profession, however, and women and many racial and ethnic groups are still significantly underrepresented in many branches of science and technology. This lack of diversity hampers the progress of science. The more voices that are heard at the table, the more robust, valuable, and productive the scientific interchange will be. The authors of this text welcome all students to the community of biologists, wishing you the joys and satisfactions of this exciting field of science.

CONCEPT CHECK 1.4

1. How does science differ from technology?
2. **MAKE CONNECTIONS** ► The gene that causes sickle-cell disease is present in a higher percentage of residents of sub-Saharan Africa than among those of African descent living in the United States. Even though this gene causes sickle-cell disease, it also provides some protection from malaria, a serious disease that is widespread in sub-Saharan Africa but absent in the United States. Discuss an evolutionary process that could account for the different percentages of the sickle-cell gene among residents of the two regions. (See Concept 1.2.)

For suggested answers, see Appendix A.

1 Chapter Review

SUMMARY OF KEY CONCEPTS

CONCEPT 1.1

The study of life reveals unifying themes (pp. 4–11)

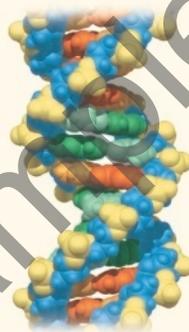
Organisation Theme: New Properties Emerge at Successive Levels of Biological Organisation

- The hierarchy of life unfolds as follows:
biosphere > ecosystem > community > population > organism > organ system > organ > tissue > cell > organelle > molecule > atom.
With each step upwards from atoms, new **emergent properties** result from interactions among components at the lower levels. In an approach called reductionism, complex systems are broken down into simpler components that are more manageable to study. In **systems biology**, scientists attempt to model the dynamic behaviour of whole biological systems by studying the interactions among the system's parts.
- Structure and function are correlated at all levels of biological organisation. The cell, an organism's basic unit of structure and function, is the lowest level that can perform all activities required for life. Cells are either eukaryotic or prokaryotic. **Eukaryotic cells** contain membrane-enclosed organelles, including a DNA-containing nucleus. **Prokaryotic cells** lack such organelles.



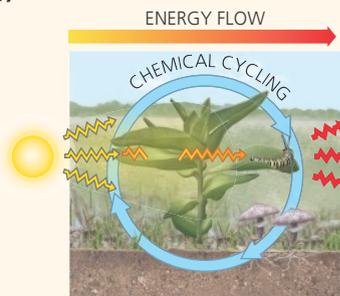
Information Theme: Life's Processes Involve the Expression and Transmission of Genetic Information

- Genetic information is encoded in the nucleotide sequences of **DNA**. It is DNA that transmits heritable information from parents to offspring. DNA sequences (called **genes**) program a cell's protein production by being transcribed into mRNA and then translated into specific proteins, a process called **gene expression**. Gene expression also produces RNAs that are not translated into protein but serve other important functions. **Genomics** is the large-scale analysis of the DNA sequences of a species (its **genome**) as well as the comparison of genomes between species. **Bioinformatics** uses computational tools to deal with huge volumes of sequence data.



Energy and Matter Theme: Life Requires the Transfer and Transformation of Energy and Matter

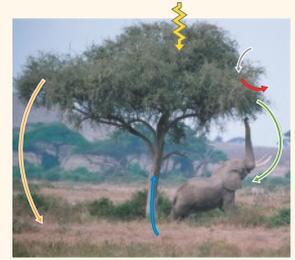
- Energy flows through an ecosystem. All organisms must perform work, which requires energy. **Producers** convert energy from sunlight to chemical energy, some of which is then passed on to **consumers**. (The rest is lost from the ecosystem as heat.) Chemicals cycle between organisms and the environment.



Interactions Theme: From Molecules to Ecosystems, Interactions Are Important in Biological Systems

- In **feedback regulation**, a process is regulated by its output or end product. In negative feedback, accumulation of the end product slows its production. In positive feedback, an end product speeds up its own production.

- Organisms interact continuously with physical factors. Plants take up nutrients from the soil and chemicals from the air and use energy from the sun.

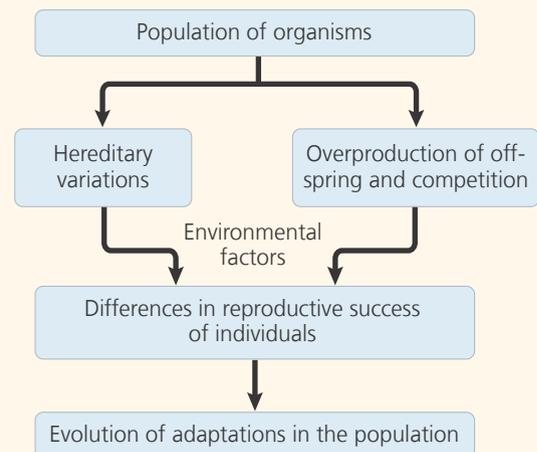
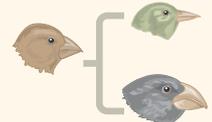


- Thinking about the muscles and nerves in your hand, how does the activity of text messaging reflect the four themes of biology described in this section?

CONCEPT 1.2

The Core Theme: Evolution accounts for the unity and diversity of life (pp. 11–16)

- Evolution**, the process of change that has transformed life on Earth, accounts for the unity and diversity of life. It also explains evolutionary adaptation—the match of organisms to their environments.
- Biologists classify species according to a system of broader and broader groups. Domain **Bacteria** and domain **Archaea** consist of prokaryotes. Domain **Eukarya**, the eukaryotes, includes various groups of protists and the kingdoms Plantae, Fungi, and Animalia. As diverse as life is, there is also evidence of remarkable unity, revealed in the similarities between different species.
- Darwin proposed **natural selection** as the mechanism for evolutionary adaptation of populations to their environments. Natural selection is the evolutionary process that occurs when a population is exposed to environmental factors that consistently cause individuals with certain heritable traits to have greater reproductive success than do individuals with other heritable traits.



- Each species is one twig of a branching tree of life extending back in time through more and more remote ancestral species. All of life is connected through its long evolutionary history.

- How could natural selection have led to the evolution of adaptations such as camouflaging coat colour in beach mice?

CONCEPT 1.3

In studying nature, scientists make observations and form and test hypotheses (pp. 16–22)

- In scientific **inquiry**, scientists make and record observations (collect **data**) and use **inductive reasoning** to draw a general conclusion, which can be developed into a testable **hypothesis**. **Deductive reasoning** makes predictions that can be used to

test hypotheses. Hypotheses must be testable; science can address neither the possibility of supernatural phenomena nor the validity of religious beliefs. Hypotheses can be tested by conducting **experiments** or, when that is not possible, by making observations. In the process of science, the core activity is testing ideas. This endeavour is influenced by exploration and discovery, community analysis and feedback, and societal outcomes.

- **Controlled experiments**, such as the investigation of coat colour in mouse populations, are designed to demonstrate the effect of one **variable** by testing control groups and experimental groups that differ in only that one variable.
- A scientific **theory** is broad in scope, generates new hypotheses, and is supported by a large body of evidence.

? What are the roles of gathering and interpreting data in the process of scientific inquiry?

CONCEPT 1.4

Science benefits from a cooperative approach and diverse viewpoints (pp. 22–24)

- Science is a social activity. The work of each scientist builds on the work of others who have come before. Scientists must be able to repeat each other's results, and integrity is key. Biologists approach questions at different levels; their approaches complement each other.
- **Technology** consists of any method or device that applies scientific knowledge for some specific purpose that affects society. The impact of basic research is not always immediately obvious.
- Diversity among scientists promotes progress in science.

? Explain why different approaches and diverse backgrounds among scientists are important.

TEST YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Level 1: Knowledge/Comprehension

- All the organisms on your campus make up
 - an ecosystem.
 - a community.
 - a population.
 - a taxonomic domain.
- Systems biology is mainly an attempt to
 - analyse genomes from different species.
 - simplify complex problems by reducing the system into smaller, less complex units.
 - understand the behaviour of entire biological systems by studying interactions among its component parts.
 - build high-throughput machines for the rapid acquisition of biological data.
- Which of the following best demonstrates the unity among all organisms?
 - emergent properties
 - descent with modification
 - the structure and function of DNA
 - natural selection
- A controlled experiment is one that
 - proceeds slowly enough that a scientist can make careful records of the results.
 - tests experimental and control groups in parallel.
 - is repeated many times to make sure the results are accurate.
 - keeps all variables constant.
- Which of the following statements best distinguishes hypotheses from theories in science?
 - Theories are hypotheses that have been proved.
 - Hypotheses are guesses; theories are correct answers.
 - Hypotheses usually are relatively narrow in scope; theories have broad explanatory power.
 - Theories are proved true; hypotheses are often contradicted by experimental results.

Level 2: Application/Analysis

- Which of the following is an example of qualitative data?
 - The fish swam in a zigzag motion.
 - The contents of the stomach are mixed every 20 seconds.
 - The temperature decreased from 20°C to 15°C.
 - The six pairs of wedge-tailed eagles hatched an average of three chicks each.
- Which sentence best describes the logic of scientific inquiry?
 - If I generate a testable hypothesis, tests and observations will support it.
 - If my prediction is correct, it will lead to a testable hypothesis.
 - If my observations are accurate, they will support my hypothesis.
 - If my hypothesis is correct, I can expect certain test results.
- DRAW IT** With rough sketches, draw a biological hierarchy similar to the one in Figure 1.3 but using a coral reef as the ecosystem, a fish as the organism, its stomach as the organ, and DNA as the molecule. Include all levels in the hierarchy.

Level 3: Synthesis/Evaluation

- EVOLUTION CONNECTION** A typical prokaryotic cell has about 3,000 genes in its DNA, while a human cell has almost 21,000 genes. About 1,000 of these genes are present in both types of cells. Based on your understanding of evolution, explain how such different organisms could have this same subset of 1,000 genes. What sorts of functions might these shared genes have?
- SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY** Based on the results of the mouse colouration case study, suggest another hypothesis researchers might use to further study the role of predators in the natural selection process.
- SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY** Scientists search the scientific literature by means of electronic databases such as PubMed, a free online database maintained by the National Center for Biotechnology Information. Use PubMed to find the abstract of a scientific article that Hopi Hoekstra published in 2015 or later.
- WRITE ABOUT A THEME: EVOLUTION** In a short essay (100–150 words), discuss Darwin's view of how natural selection resulted in both unity and diversity of life on Earth. Include in your discussion some of his evidence. (See a suggested grading rubric and tips for writing good essays in the Study Area of MasteringBiology under "Write About a Theme.")
- SYNTHESISE YOUR KNOWLEDGE**



Can you pick out the mossy leaf-tailed gecko lying against the tree trunk in this photo? How is the appearance of the gecko a benefit in terms of survival? Given what you have learned about evolution, natural selection, and genetic information in this chapter, describe how the gecko's colouration might have evolved.

For selected answers, see Appendix A.



For additional practice questions, check out the **Dynamic Study Modules** in MasteringBiology. You can use them to study on your smartphone, tablet, or computer anytime, anywhere!