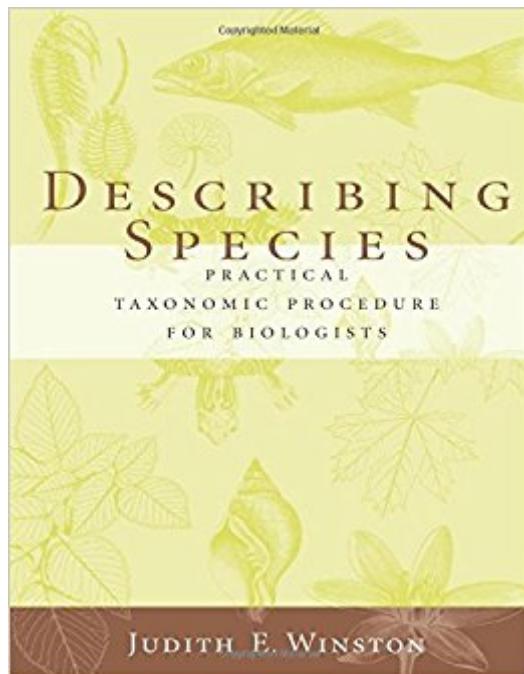


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# Describing Species



## Synopsis

New species are discovered every day and cataloguing all of them has grown into a nearly insurmountable task worldwide. Now, this definitive reference manual acts as a style guide for writing and filing species descriptions. New collecting techniques and new technology have led to a dramatic increase in the number of species that are discovered. Explorations of unstudied regions and new habitats for almost any group of organisms can result in a large number of new species discoveries and hence the need to be described. Yet there is no one source a student or researcher can readily consult to learn the basic practical aspects of taxonomic procedures. Species description can present a variety of difficulties: Problems arise when new species are not given names because their discoverers do not know how to write a formal species description or when these species are poorly described. Biologists may also have to deal with nomenclatural problems created by previous workers or resulting from new information generated by their own research. This practical resource for scientists and students contains instructions and examples showing how to describe newly discovered species in both the animal and plant kingdoms. With special chapters on publishing taxonomic papers and on ecology in species description, as well as sections covering subspecies, genus-level, and higher taxa descriptions, *Describing Species* enhances any writer's taxonomic projects, reports, checklists, floras, faunal surveys, revisions, monographs, or guides. The volume is based on current versions of the International Codes of Zoological and Botanical Nomenclature and recognizes that systematics is a global and multicultural exercise. Though *Describing Species* has been written for an English-speaking audience, it is useful anywhere. Taxonomy is spoken and will be a valuable tool for professionals and students in zoology, botany, ecology, paleontology, and other fields of biology.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is probably the most exhaustive treatment available of the practical aspects of describing new species or higher taxa. (Henry Disney, Cambridge University Nature)A practical manual for all biologists, especially ecologists and other field naturalists, professionals or students, who are immersed in biodiversity and are likely to discover new or unknown species....The principal qualities of Winston's manual reside in its simple writing, direct and free of superfluous jargon, in the profusion of concrete and recent examples, and in its rich bibliography. (Pierre Brunel, University of Montreal Ecoscience)Fascinating reading. (CABI Bioscience)... should be read by all students on biodiversity courses. (Biologist)

A basic practical manual for the process of describing new species, this desperately needed desk reference and guide to nomenclatural procedure and taxonomic writing serves as a Strunk & White of species description, covering both botanical and zoological codes of nomenclature.

With the current biodiversity crisis and the need to describe the majority of the diversity of species on earth, this is an especially timely addition to the literature on alpha taxonomy (describing new species) which is approachable to the nonspecialist. Being an ecologist who must occasionally put pen to new species discovered in the course of field work, I would have loved to have had this book available while I was in graduate school. Without too much depth, Winston walks (at times seeming to literally hold one's hand) non-taxonomists through the process of not only describing species that are new to science, but also the critical steps to ensure that the organism you are describing is actually new to science. Winston stresses the pitfalls of making this disastrous mistake as well as the intricacies of working with specialists at museums and universities who are necessary collaborators, at one level or another. Two complaints with the book are a number of typographic errors, especially with incorrect articles (a, an, the) and that I think Winston could have more strongly stressed (1) the importance of examining material directly before deciding that something is indeed new and (2) the importance of complete synonymy (researching all the possible names that a particular species [or higher taxon] may have had in the past). This is hard work and is usually not as good as it should be to be useful for future researchers. Having visited a number of museums

during the course of my work, I have found the curatorial staffs as well as the curators to be extremely helpful but I believe that they will all be appreciative if every nonspecialist who walks through their door has already read and mulled over the advice and procedures in Winston's book. Overall, a clear guide to a sometimes confusing and daunting task.

I learned a lot about how to name species. Some of the text was pretty dry, though.

I found the book to be very informative. It has helped me understand how species are described and why species are classified. I also found the chapter on naming species in Latin and Greek educational because my linguistic skills are very poor and so this book has given me a bit more understanding of Greek and Latin. The book is more like a manual and reference. I am neither a biologist or biology student but this book has given me an initiation into the science of taxonomy and the study of nomenclature. I congratulate Judith Winston on a very well written book.

The book is excellent, very informative and go the point in each part. I bought the book because I am in writing a paper about a new specie of plant for Mona Island, Puerto Rico. This book explained in a precise form each part and how you can write the paper.

Is an excellent book if you are starting or you have no idea how to describe species. Very easy to understand for students and professionals that began in taxonomy.

Although far from being a Taxonomy for the Utterly Ignorant, Judith Winston's *Describing Species* provides a basic and thorough grounding in the history, concepts, and procedures of describing and naming species. The book is intended for [graduate] students, scholars, and researchers -- systematic biologists, palaeontologists, molecular biologists, biochemists, ecologists, et al. -- who want, or need, to research and publish taxonomic descriptions, and as such is not for those who have little to no knowledge of such matters. Although it does to some extent cover systematics as such, at least enough to provide a framework, it concentrates on taxonomy (that part of systematics that is concerned with description, naming, and classification of organisms) and is designed to be used as "a desk reference and guide to nomenclatural procedure and taxonomic writing", to use Winston's description from her preface, in the context of a course in systematics, or as a supplement to a systematics textbook. It even has a chapter ("Visiting Collections: What to Expect and How to Behave") on how to approach, and get along with, professional researchers -- a chapter

that, mutatis mutandis, would be generally applicable to any student in any field. It walks the reader through the processes of diagnosis, description, writing, and publication, giving enough background and explanation to put each step in context of the larger picture (a why-to as opposed to merely a how-to, in other words), all in a professional yet informal style that makes the book very accessible as a whole -- even I, not a scientist but a thorough-going humanist (a stranger in a strange land, so to speak) seeking to increase my knowledge and understanding, found it comprehensible, albeit by no means easy. In addition, it offers many bibliographies for those who wish to delve more deeply. In short, with the caveat that (a) I am not a biologist and (b) this book is not for the utter neophyte, I would commend this book to the attention of those whose interest is professional or would-be professional, as well as to those who are interested in the field but are for whatever reason beyond the "for Dummies" (TM) level.

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