

Monitoring biodiversity: Project seeks to catalog arctic life through 'DNA Barcoding'

[Molecular biologist Inger Greve] Alsos is currently taking part in the formidable task of genetically identifying not just all the species and subspecies of berries, but all the flora and fauna in Norway. It's all part of a countrywide project called the Norwegian Barcode of Life (NorBOL).

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Researchers hope that the data will provide the basis for monitoring biodiversity, primarily in the Arctic, in the face of climate change.

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The project's central technique, called [DNA barcoding](#), is a method that enables the classification of all life forms via genetic markers—called barcodes—unique to particular genotypes. Barcoding can also facilitate the discovery of new species. Using this approach, new and existing taxa can be classified unambiguously, beyond the species level and without the expertise of taxonomists.

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"Register [the barcode] for a particular gene in each plant species, and you can discriminate them next time they are encountered," [biologist Paul Herbert] says, "even if it's just a grain of pollen or a leaf fragment in a caterpillar."

Alsos and senior engineer Marie Merkel, who are in charge of barcoding vascular plants and fungi as part of NorBOL, have already barcoded about 2,000 plant varieties.

Read full, original post: [Researchers DNA Barcode the Arctic](#)