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Tree-kangaroo taxonomy

Taxonomy, the science of classifying organisms, is the oldest of the biological disciplines. Its basic principles were first set down by the Swedish naturalist Carl Gustav Linnaeus in the early 1700s and have remained largely unaltered to the present day. The Linnaean system is hierarchical, with the Species as its fundamental unit. Similar species are grouped together into Genera, similar Genera into Families, Families into Orders, Orders into Classes and Classes into the largest division of the animal kingdom, the Phylum.

The convention is to assign a generic as well as a specific name to each species. All tree-kangaroos, for example, belong to the genus *Dendrolagus*. The Grizzled Tree-kangaroo is *Dendrolagus inustus*, Bennett's Tree-kangaroo *Dendrolagus bennettianus*, and so on for all of the described tree-kangaroo species. Proceeding further up the hierarchy, the tree-kangaroo genus *Dendrolagus* is in the Family Macropodidae (which includes all the large kangaroos). The Macropods, together with all the other marsupials that possess a single pair of functional incisors in the lower jaw, form the Order Diprotodonta. Diprotodonts are members of the Class Mammalia in the Phylum Chordata. When referred to in the formal scientific literature, the name of the describer, the date of publication of the description of the species and the family to which it belongs are often given. Bennett's Tree-kangaroo, for example, appears as *Dendrolagus bennettianus* (Macropodidae) De Vis 1887.