

Estimated Number of Animals on the Earth.

How many species of animal are on the earth?

It's a surprisingly difficult question to answer with absolute certainty, as scientists are still discovering and classifying new species. However, here's a summary of the current understanding:

- **Described Species:** Over 1.5 million living animal species have been formally described and cataloged. A significant portion of these (around 1.05 million) are insects.¹
- **Estimated Total:** The most widely cited estimate suggests there are approximately **7.77 million animal species** on Earth.² Some other estimates put the total number of animal species in the range of 1-2 million to as high as 20 million or even more.
- **Undiscovered Species:** A substantial majority of animal species, particularly in less-explored environments like the deep sea and tropical rainforests, are believed to be undiscovered.³ Estimates suggest that 86% of land species and 91% of sea species have yet to be identified.⁴
- **Insects Dominate:** Insects make up the vast majority of described and estimated animal species.⁵
- **Microscopic Life:** It's important to note that these figures primarily refer to macroscopic animals. When considering microscopic life like bacteria and archaea, the estimated number of species on Earth can range into the billions or even trillions.⁶

Where Did Noah Live Before the Flood?

Where did Noah live when the flood happened? According to biblical accounts and related ancient Mesopotamian texts, Noah most likely lived in **Mesopotamia**, the region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. This area is generally considered to be the cradle of civilization and is also where the Garden of Eden is traditionally placed.

While the exact location isn't specified in great detail, various ancient flood narratives, including the Epic of Gilgamesh, which has strong parallels to the biblical flood story, also originate from Mesopotamia and mention cities in that region.

After the flood, the Bible states that Noah's Ark came to rest on the "mountains of Ararat" (Genesis 8:4), which is a mountainous region located in modern-day Turkey, at the northern edge of Mesopotamia. This suggests that Noah and his family likely settled in that general vicinity after the flood as well.

How many different animals were in Mesopotamia during the time of Noah?

It's impossible to give an exact number of "different animals" that were in Mesopotamia during the time of Noah, as this refers to a period far in the past (traditionally associated with the Early Bronze Age, roughly 3000-2000 BCE). However, we can describe the types of animals known to have been present in ancient Mesopotamia based on archaeological evidence, ancient texts, and artistic depictions:

Domesticated Animals: These were crucial to Mesopotamian life and would have been very common:

- **Sheep:** Extremely important for wool, meat, and milk.
- **Goats:** Also important for milk, meat, and hair.¹
- **Cattle (including aurochs, the wild ancestors of domestic cattle):** Used for meat, milk, hides, and as draft animals (oxen) for plowing and hauling. Bulls were often highly revered.²
- **Donkeys:** Essential for transport, carrying heavy loads, and pulling carts/chariots.
- **Dogs:** Likely used for hunting, guarding, and companionship.³
- **Pigs:** Raised for meat.
- **Cats:** Likely present as pest control.
- **Poultry:** Various birds like chickens and geese would have been kept for eggs and meat.
- **Kungas:** These were early hybrid animals, a cross between domesticated donkeys and wild Syrian onagers (wild asses), used for pulling royal vehicles and war wagons.

Wild Animals: Mesopotamia had a diverse range of wild animals, though some are now extinct or rare in the region:

- **Lions:** Were present and often depicted in art, symbolizing royal power and hunting prowess.⁴ Lion hunting was a significant ritual for kings.
- **Wild Asses (Onagers/Hemionids):** Fast and agile, these were the wild relatives of donkeys.
- **Gazelles:** Hunted for food.
- **Bears:** Present in the region, though less frequently depicted than lions.
- **Wolves:** Predators in the ecosystem.
- **Foxes, Weasels, Martens:** Smaller carnivores.
- **Hares, Jerboas:** Small mammals.
- **Birds:** A wide variety of birds would have been present, including waterfowl in the marshy areas, and birds like doves, swallows, and ravens (mentioned in flood narratives).⁵ Ostriches were also present around 2000 BCE.
- **Reptiles:** Snakes and possibly crocodiles (though more common in the Nile, some sources suggest they might have been found on the Euphrates around 800 BCE, indicating their presence at earlier times is plausible).
- **Fish:** Abundant in the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

- **Scorpions and various insects:** Common in the climate.

Animals from Further Afield (potentially via trade or limited presence):

- **Elephants:** While not native to Mesopotamia itself, some were present on the Euphrates around 800 BCE, suggesting occasional contact or trade.
- **Rhinoceros:** Also mentioned in connection with the Indus Valley, indicating long-distance connections.
- **Camels:** Introduced to the area from Arabia around 2000-1000 BCE, so they might have been present towards the later part of the "time of Noah" or shortly after.
- **Horses:** While some sources suggest domestication as early as 4000 BCE, they became more widely used and important in Mesopotamia later than donkeys, around 1500 BCE.

It's important to remember that the biblical flood narrative is typically understood as a global event, implying that Noah took representatives of *all* land-dwelling, air-breathing animals.⁶ However, if we're speaking strictly about the *fauna of Mesopotamia* at that approximate historical period, the list above gives a good overview of the creatures that would have been familiar to someone living in that region.