A free, open-access library of high-quality organism illustrations for science communication

We create vector graphics of model organisms and emerging biological research organisms to enhance our publications. We're sharing these editable graphics under a CC0 license for other scientists to use in figures, slides, teaching materials, or other outputs.

Purpose

We develop tools to harness biological innovation across the tree of life and routinely depict a variety of model and non-model organisms in our pub figures and talks. For our Zoogle project [1], our in-house illustrator generated a particularly large set of images of diverse research species. We thought it would be helpful to share these visuals freely with the scientific community to enhance the accuracy and quality of scientific illustrations in research publications, presentations, and other media.

We've compiled professional-quality illustrations of 71 organisms in our initial release (including a few viruses, which we've lumped in with traditional "organisms"). The library encompasses well-known model organisms like mice, zebrafish, *C. elegans*, *Drosophila*, and *E. coli*, plus a variety of less-studied but potentially powerful models like tardigrades, amoebas, and algae.

We're sharing vector and raster images (with transparent background) of each creature so you can use them in different ways. They're all copyright-free and

shared under a CC0 license that puts them into the public domain. We hope you'll find them helpful and let us know what you do with them!

- Access the **live illustration library** on Airtable (also embedded directly in this pub).
- An **archived version of the illustration files** is available on Zenodo.
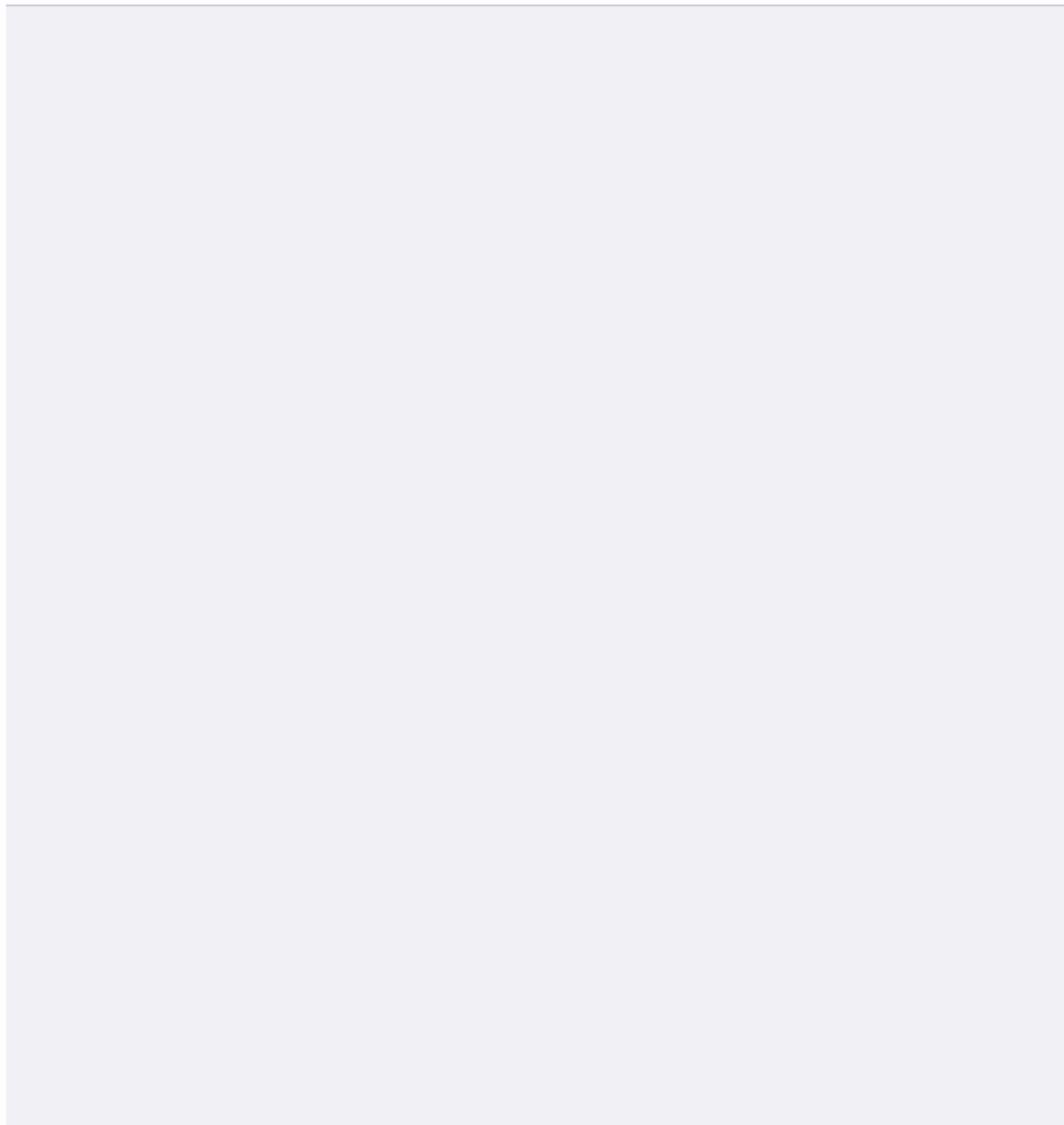
The illustration library

We're sharing illustrations of a wide variety of organisms so others can use them to enhance communication about biology, evolution, and the natural world. As we add to this library, new organism image files will appear in real time on Airtable, and we'll periodically archive them on Zenodo.

Everything in this library is available under a CC0 license, which has no usage restrictions. That said, feel free to cite this pub to let us know you found it useful and help others find this resource.

Each organism in this initial upload has at least three types of image files (see "What types of image files are included?"). Some of the illustrations are adapted from PhyloPic silhouettes — credit for these is provided in the "Notes" field.

By default, organisms are sorted A–Z by scientific name, and you can search, filter, and sort using the controls at the top of the library. For organisms without a generally accepted common name, we chose one we felt would be most widely understood.

Browse the embedded library

Click on a card to preview and download individual files.
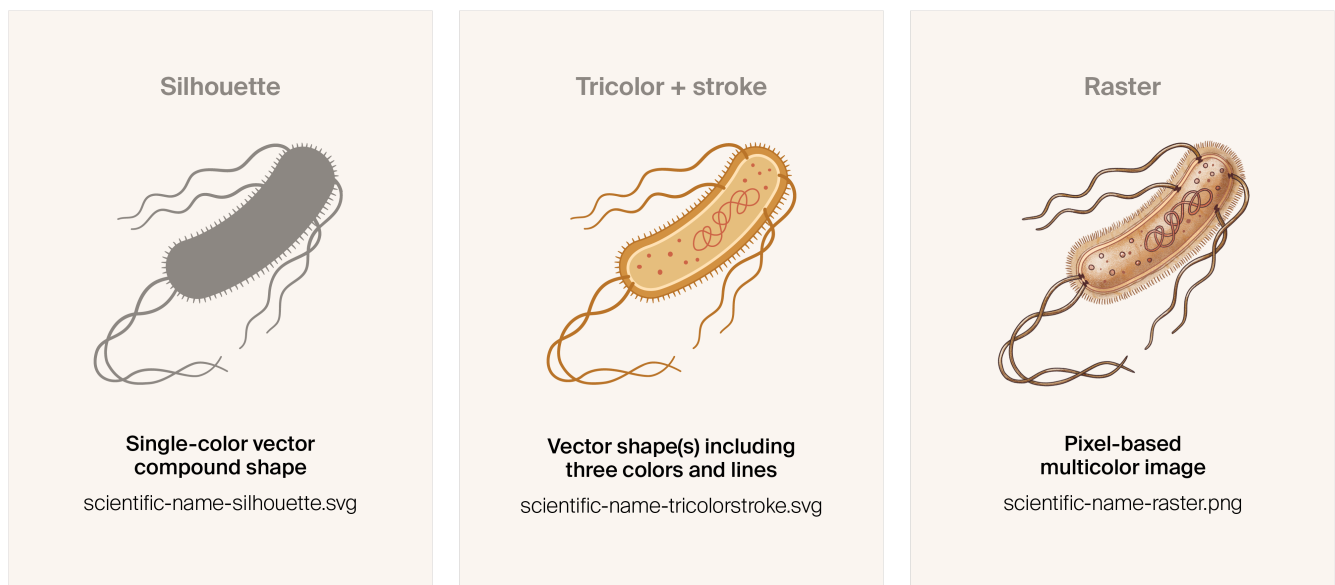
What types of image files are included?

Figure 1. **Image styles and corresponding file naming conventions**.
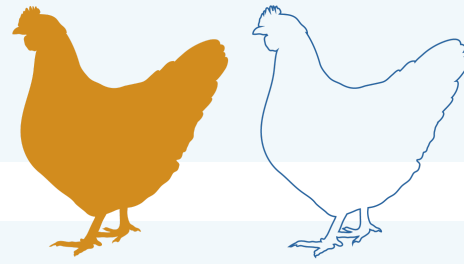While we may not provide all three versions for every future addition, these three are available for the initial set of 71 organisms.

For most of the organisms included, we've shared three types of illustrations: **silhouette**, **tricolor + stroke**, and **raster** (Figure 1). These all have transparent backgrounds. Read on to learn more about these options and how you might use them.
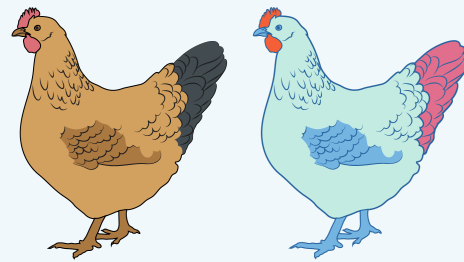
Silhouette

The silhouette is our most basic file type, and can be used for icons or as a starting point for adding your own details. Vector files are scalable without losing detail or smoothness. You can

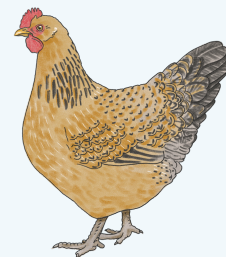also easily invert a silhouette to show a hollow outline of the organism.

Tricolor + stroke

This is a more detailed vector than the silhouette, and incorporates line details (or strokes), including an outline. You can easily change shapes, colors, and line widths. Note that, depending on program settings, the stroke width may not scale in proportion to the filled shapes.

Raster

Raster image files are pixel-based. They include more detail and texture than vector files, but they may become pixelated if scaled too large, and they're more difficult to edit. They have a hand-drawn aesthetic and a broad range of colors.

Pub preparation

We used Claude (Sonnet 4) to generate search engine optimization (SEO) ideas and incorporated some of the suggested keywords into the text.

Next steps

As we generate new illustrations, we'll add them to the library. We'd love to hear feedback from you on what might make this resource more usable. And have you spotted any errors we should fix? Feel free to comment publicly at the end of the pub or use the form below to submit scientific errors.

We'd also really appreciate seeing examples of how you're using these graphics. Please tag us on social media or share in a comment!

Report an error

We strive to make this resource as scientifically accurate as possible while keeping the illustrations simple and aesthetically pleasing. If you see any problems or misleading aspects of an illustration, please let us know!

Which organism has an issue? *

You can select more than one organism if you spot multiple problems.

Add record

Describe the problem(s) in as much detail as possible. Please provide reference images or papers if * appropriate.

If describing errors with multiple illustrations, please clearly explain which you're referring to with each explanation.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Mitch Centers for animating some of our illustrations and providing us with GIFs to include in the library.

Contributors (A–Z)

- **Audrey Bell**: Conceptualization, Visualization, Writing
- **Megan L. Hochstrasser**: Conceptualization, Supervision, Writing
- **Robert Roth**: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Writing
- **Greg Wright**: Conceptualization

References

1. Avasthi P, York R. (2024). A data-driven approach to match organisms and research problems. https://doi.org/10.57844/arcadia-48b0-607a