

Life Teeming

Life in the macro world may pale in comparison to a microscopic point on a one-foot square of earth:

A flat of soil like this holds a vast and inter-connected world that is yet unknown to man. There's trillions of micro-organisms, tens of thousands of species of bacteria and protozoa, nearly all of them uncatalogued. There can be thousands of miles of wispy hyphae fungal threads in a patch of soil this big. There can be a million microscopic arthropods and other tiny insects too small for the naked eye to see. There are dozens of earth worms of various sizes. In fact, there are more small living things in this little square of earth than there are large living things on the entire surface of our planet. Think about it. We humans live on the surface. We think that's where the life is. We think in terms of people and elephants and sharks and forests of trees, but our perceptions are wrong. The truth of life on our planet is very different. The real bedrock, fundamental life, teeming, burrowing, breeding, continuously active, is down here at this level. And this is where the discoveries are going to be made.

Crichton, Michael. *Micro*. Harper 2012. Chapter 8