



Ecology Vocabulary



Ecology: Study of interactions of living organisms with one another and with their physical environment

Habitat: place where a particular population of a species lives

Community: the many different species that live together in a habitat

Ecosystem: a community and all of the physical aspects of its habitat (soil, air, water)

Biosphere ecosystem comprising the entire earth and the living organisms that inhabit it

Camouflage device used for concealment

Mimicry close external resemblance of an organism to some different organism

Population assemblage of a specific type of organism living in a given area

Population gurb factors which restrict population

Population growth increase in the number of people who inhabit a territory

Prairie extensive slightly undulating tract of land

Abiotic: the physical aspects of a habitat

Biotic: the living organisms of a habitat

Biodiversity: number of species living within an ecosystem

Pioneer Species: the first organisms to live in a new habitat; usually small, fast growing plants

Succession: regular progression of species replacement

Primary Succession: succession that occurs where plants have not grown before (ex: volcanoes, receding glaciers)

Secondary Succession: succession that occurs in areas where there has been previous growth (ex: forest fires, forest clearings)

Primary Productivity: the rate at which organic material is produced by photosynthetic organisms in an ecosystem

Autotroph: Organisms that make their own food, producers

Heterotroph: Organisms that consume producers for food, consumers

Producer: organisms that first capture energy and that make their own food (plants)

Consumer: organisms that consume producers for food (animals)

Trophic Level: a specific level in an ecosystem based on the organism's source of energy

Food Chain: the path of energy through the trophic levels of an ecosystem

Herbivores: second trophic level, animals that eat plants or other primary producer

Carnivores: third trophic level, animals that eat herbivores

Omnivores: both herbivores and carnivores

Detritivores: obtain energy from organic waste and dead bodies, release nutrients back into environment (decomposers: worms, bacteria, fungi)

Food Web: a complicated, interconnected group of food chains

Biomass: the dry weight of tissue and other organic matter found in a specific ecosystem

Predation: the act of one organism feeding on another

Symbiosis: two or more species live together in a close, long-term association

Parasitism: one organism feeds on and usually lives on or in another, does not usually kill the host (ticks)

Mutualism: a symbiotic relationship in which both species benefit (ants and aphids)

Commensalism: one species benefits and the other is neither harmed nor helped

Fundamental Niche: the entire range of conditions an organism is potentially able to occupy

Realized Niche: the part of its fundamental niche that a species occupies

Biome: major biological community that occurs over a large area of land

Introduced Species: an organism that is not native to an area, but is brought there intentionally or unintentionally by humans

Niche: how and where an organism lives and the job it performs. This includes diet, activity, how it affects energy flow in systems. THIS IS NOT THE SAME AS HABITAT