

TEACHER PACKET GLOSSARY

(words in bold in the text)

Adaptation: evolutionary change in body structure, function or behavior that helps an organism to survive in its environment

Arboreal: refers to organisms that climb in or live in trees

Arthropod: the phylum, Arthropoda, of invertebrate animals characterized by a hard exoskeleton and jointed appendages. Arthropods include insects, spiders, millipedes, centipedes and crustaceans.

Bacteria: microscopic, unicellular organisms. Some bacteria in the soil help to break down organic matter.

Basic needs: necessities for the survival of an organism: food, water, shelter, air and space

Biodiversity: the relative abundance and number of living organism in a certain area. Biodiversity can refer to the diversity of genes in a species and the diversity of ecosystems on the planet.

Broadleaf: a plant with broad, flat leaves

Browser: an animal that eats primarily shoots, twigs, buds and/or leaves of woody vegetation (shrubs and trees)

Canopy: the top layer of vegetation in an ecosystem where leaves and branches of trees or shrubs shade the lower levels and may overlap

Carnivore: an organism that kills and eats animals

Carnivorous: refers to organisms that kill and eat animals

Carrion: decaying flesh of dead animals

Climax: the final stage of ecological succession in which the ecosystem is stable and species have reached a state of dynamic equilibrium

Conifers: plants that reproduce by way of seed-bearing cones

Conservation: the management of natural resources, including wildlife and habitats, to sustain resources for the future. Preservation, protection and wise use can all be a part of conservation practices.

Deciduous: refers to plants that drop all of their leaves at one time once a year

Decomposer: an organism that participates in the process of decomposition

Decomposition: the process of breaking down matter into smaller parts or simpler compounds

Disturbance: a change in the local environment that causes the removal of organisms and allows other species to establish themselves. Disturbance locally sets succession back to the beginning stages.

Diurnal: active during daylight hours

Ecosystem: an area of any size in which biotic (living) and abiotic (non-living) components interact and through which nutrients and energy cycle.

Emergent layer: the highest layer of vegetation in a tropical rain forest; consists of individual trees that stick out above the canopy layer.

Epiphyll: a plant that grows on the leaf of another plant, but does not take away water or nutrients from the host plant.

Epiphyte: a plant that grows on the twigs or branches of other plants but is not parasitic. Epiphytes get water and nutrients from the atmosphere, not from the substrate on which they grow.

Evergreen: refers to a plant with green leaves present throughout the year. Leaves are shed and replaced individually.

Food chain: a system of feeding levels, showing the flow of food energy from one organism to another

Food web: a network of many food chains within an ecosystem that interlock to form a web

Forest floor: the ground level of a forest ecosystem

Fungi: plant-like organisms that lack the ability to photosynthesize; instead, they absorb food from other organisms and are responsible for decay and nutrient recycling

Grazer: an animal that feeds mainly on herbaceous vegetation

Habitat: the area that supplies an organism or group of organisms with all their basic needs for survival (food, water, shelter, air and space)

Herbaceous: refers to plants that have soft, not woody, tissues

Herbivore: an organism that eats living plant material

Herbivorous: refers to an organism that relies on plant matter for nutrition

Hibernation: a state of lowered body functions (such as metabolism) in which animals may pass the winter

Humus: organic matter formed from decomposed plants or animals

Interdependence: the reliance of organisms on each other for survival

Invasive: an introduced species that rapidly populates and expands its range in an area and

causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health

Liana: woody vines

Lichen: algae and fungi living together as one organism in a mutually beneficial relationship

Mycelia: mat formed by interwoven hyphae of fungi

Mycorrhizal fungi: symbiotic association formed between mycelia of fungi and roots of plants

Native: a species that originated or occurs naturally in a certain area; a species that has not been moved from one area to another by humans

Needleleaf: a plant with needle-like leaves

Niche: an organism's role in its environment including its location and function

Nocturnal: active at night

Nurse log: a fallen dead tree on which other plants grow. Nurse logs provide a constant supply of moisture and nutrients for seedlings, as well as food and shelter to many animals.

Nutrient: a basic substance that is used for the growth and development of an organism

Omnivore: an organism that feeds on living plant matter and kills and eats animals

Omnivorous: refers to an organism that eats living plant material and kills and eats animals

Organism: a living thing, such as a plant or animal

Parasite: an organism that lives on or in another organism, gaining its nutrition at the expense of the host organism

Photosynthesis: the process of creating energy (glucose), from carbon dioxide and water utilizing energy from sunlight. Oxygen is given off as a by-product.

Precipitation: water that falls or is naturally deposited on the earth; may be in the form of rain, snow, fog drip, hail, etc.

Predator: an animal that obtains food by killing and eating other animals

Prey: animals that are eaten by predators

Primary consumers: animals that eat producers (plants). Herbivores and omnivores are primary consumers.

Producers: plants that use the sun's energy to produce energy-rich carbohydrates and sugars

Raptor: a bird that catches and kills its prey using its feet; bird of prey

Riparian: associated with banks of natural waterways (such as rivers and streams)

Scavenger: an animal that feeds on flesh of dead and decaying animals

Secondary consumer: animals that eat other animals; carnivores and omnivores

Soil: the upper layer of earth in which plants grow; made up of clay, silt and sand particles mixed with organic matter

Snag: the standing trunk of a dead tree

Succession: the change in the composition of an ecosystem, which occurs over time due to species responding to their environment. This involves the fading importance of old species and the increasing dominance of climax species.

Temperate forest: forests that grow in regions of moderate climates where temperatures cycle between cool to cold periods (winter) and warm to hot period (summer). Temperate forests of the Pacific northwest are dominated by evergreen, coniferous trees.

Torpor: a temporary state of lowered body functions (not as extreme as estivation or hibernation) in which an animal may spend short periods of time. An animal may awaken from torpor in order to obtain food or pursue other activities.

Understory: the layer in plant ecosystems between the canopy and the forest floor

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Rainforest Alliance (see “Education”)

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