

NAME:

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Ecology Vocabulary

abiotic factor – a non-living part of the environment (ex. light, water, heat, rock, energy, mineral)

biosphere – any part of the earth that supports life

biotic factor – all the living things in an environment (and substances produced by those organisms which would not otherwise be in the environment) (ex. apples, a rabbit, moss, food, waste products, organic matter)

biotic potential – the fastest rate a population could possibly grow (the maximum possible rate that an organism or group of organisms could reproduce at)

camouflage – an adaptation that allows animals to hide by blending into its surroundings

carnivore – type of consumer that eat only other consumers (Ex. lion, seal, owl)

carrying capacity – the largest number of individuals of one species an ecosystem can support over time. (Ex. the field behind my house can only support three rabbits and no more.)

commensalism – a symbiotic relationship where one organism benefits and the other is not affected (one gets something good, the other doesn't gain or lose anything)

community – all the populations in an ecosystem
(Ex. all the deer, rabbits, cows, fungi, insects, bacteria, etc. that live on Old MacDonald's farm)

competition – any struggle between organisms (same or different species) who want the same resource(s) (food, shelter, mates, etc.)

consumers – organisms that eat other organisms as their food (they can't make their own food)

decomposer – type of consumer that breaks down organic materials to get energy (Ex. most fungi and bacteria)

ecology – the study of interactions that occur between organisms and their environment.

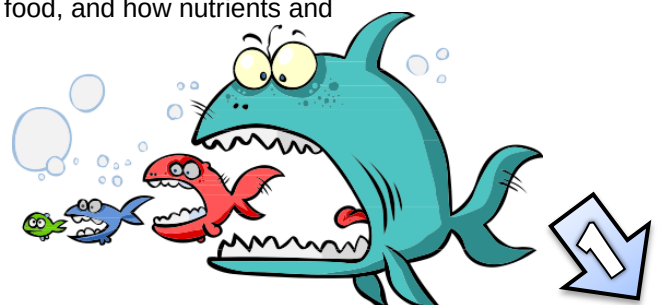
ecosystem – all the organisms living in an area and all the non-living features of their environment (Ex. the frogs, birds, fish, bugs, sunlight, temperature, trees, lily pads, cat tails, soil, pollution, minerals, and parking lot run off are all part of the Packer Pond ecosystem)

energy pyramid – a diagram showing the amount of energy flowing from producers up to the top predatory consumers.

environment – the total of the surroundings (air, water, soil, other organisms, climate, etc.) influencing each living being's existence, including physical, biological, and all other factor; the surroundings of an organism

food chain – a diagram showing how each organism gets food, and how nutrients and energy are passed from creature to creature.

food web – a series of overlapping food chains



habitat – the specific place in which an organism lives (Ex. deer live in the forest, lions live on the plains)

herbivore – type of consumer that eat only producers (Ex. cow, caterpillar, goose)

limiting factor – anything that restricts the number of individuals in a population (Ex. a lack of food, too many predators, not enough living space, not enough nesting material)

mimicry – an adaptation where one organism looks like another organism to help itself avoid predators

mutualism – a symbiotic relationship where both organisms benefit (both get something good out of the relationship)

niche – the role of an organism in its environment: how it survives, gets food and shelter, finds a mate, cares for its young, avoids danger, etc.

omnivore – type of consumer that eats producers or consumers (Ex. bear, human, blue jay)

parasitism – a symbiotic relationship where one organism benefits and the other is hurt

population – all the organisms of one species that live in an ecosystem (Ex. all the frogs that live in Packer pond, all the rabbits that live in a certain field)

population density – the number of individuals in a given area (individuals ÷ unit area)

predator – an organism that kills other organisms for food (Ex. tarantula, shark, lion)

prey – an animal that is killed by another organism as food (Ex. rabbit, deer, insects)

producers – organisms that can create food from non-food materials (Ex. pond scum, grass)

scavenger – type of consumer that eats dead bodies of consumers that they did not kill. Scavengers would be considered either carnivores or omnivores. (Ex. buzzard, coyote, crow, fly)

symbiosis – when two or more organisms of different species have a close relationship

