

Glossary

abiotic non-living things, e.g., rocks and weather

allopatric species living in different ranges that do not interbreed due to geographic separation

alluvium clay, silt, sand or gravel deposited by running water

altricial young helpless at birth or hatching and requiring parental care for a period of time

angiosperms plants bearing seeds in an ovary; a flowering plant

arthropods invertebrate animals with jointed legs and segmented body parts; includes insects, spiders, crustaceans, and others

autotrophic capable of self-nourishment by using photosynthesis or chemosynthesis

biome a major ecological community such as a forest or desert

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

biota the plant and animal life of a region or period

biotic living things, e.g. plants and animals

camouflage protective coloration or shape that blends with the background

carnivore an organism that eats mostly meat

carrion decaying flesh

CFC's (chlorofluorocarbons) organic compounds that contain carbon, chlorine, and fluorine atoms; they are used as highly effective refrigerants such as from Freon™

consumer an organism that feeds on plants or animals, living or dead

crepuscular active at dusk and dawn

Cretaceous period 80,000-140,000 years ago

decomposers fungi and bacteria that convert dead organic matter into inorganic forms

dentition the makeup of a set of teeth including their kind, number, and arrangement

detritus dead and decomposing organic material

dioxin a very toxic chemical residue of some herbicides and other chemical reactions

diurnal active at daytime

echolocation locating objects by reflected sound

ecology the study of relationships between organisms and their physical environment

ecosystem a system formed by the interaction of a community of organisms with their physical environment

estivation summer hibernation or reduced activity

estuary the zone of mixing of fresh and salt water where a river runs into the ocean

eutherian giving live birth in contrast to egg laying

extirpate locally extinct

fractal a geometrical or physical structure having an irregular or fragmented shape at all scales of measurement

genotype the combination of genes present in the cells of an individual; genetic make up

glade dry, prairie-like area in a forest

gliding flight flight using outstretched wings or skin flaps

habitat a place where plants and animals live and interact with their environment

herbivore eats mostly plants

heterotrophic not capable of producing its own food; needing complex carbon and nitrogen compounds for metabolic synthesis

hibernation the act of passing the winter in a state of lower metabolism, body temperature and activity

insectivorous eats insects

integument outer covering; skin

keystone species one species whose introduction to or loss from an ecosystem dramatically alters the ecosystem

lignite a soft coal, usually dark brown, often having a distinct wood-like texture and intermediate density

loess a loamy soil deposit formed by wind, usually yellowish and calcareous, common in the Mississippi Valley

marsupial carry young in a pouch

mimicry when one species benefits from resembling another species

nectar the sweet secretion of a plant that attracts insects or birds to pollinate the flower

niche the ecological role of a species within a community especially in regards to food consumption

nocturnal active at night

omnivore eats plants and animals

orogeny the process of mountain formation

oviparous producing eggs that mature and hatch after being expelled from the body

phenotype the physical manifestation of genetic traits

pollen the yellow powder-like male sex cells of plants found on the stamens of flowers

precocial young highly independent soon after birth; requiring little parental care

producers organisms that are able to produce their own food from inorganic substances; e.g. plants

riparian land along rivers or other bodies of water

speciation the formation of a new species as a result of geographic, physiological, anatomical, or behavioral factors that prevent previously interbreeding populations from interbreeding

species the major subdivision of a genus or subgenus, regarded as the basic category of biological classification, composed of related individuals that resemble one another, are able to breed among themselves, but are not able to breed with members of another species.

stamen the pollen bearing organ of a flower

substrate the mineral material on which soil forms; the surface on which an organism lives

succession the progressive replacement of one community by another until a climax community is established

sympatric species living in the same range that may interbreed

taiga sub-arctic coniferous forest that starts where the tundra ends

trophic level levels in the food chain pyramid; plants are lowest, then, herbivores, carnivores and omnivores

vertebrates animals having a backbone or spinal column