Ecosystems Vocabulary

Vocabulary Term	Meaning/Definition
abiotic factors *	nonliving parts of an ecosystem (sunlight, soil, temperature, air)
adaptation *	a change in order to fit in a new situation
algae blooms *	Too many algae crowd the water and block sunlight from reaching
	underwater grasses; caused by too many nutrients in water from sewer
	damage and fertilizer run-off
aquatic *	having to do with water
aquarium *	a glass or plastic container in which aquatic organisms can live and be observed
aquatic ecosystem	includes freshwater areas, estuaries, marine areas
bacteria	helps in the natural recycling process, a decomposer
balance	equilibrium in an ecosystem
biodiversity *	a wide variety of organisms
biome	complex ecological community, extends over a large geographic area,
	consists of many ecosystems
biotic factors *	living components of an ecosystem (the organisms) sur such as plants and
	animals; organisms depend on abiotic factors for survival
carnivore *	organism (consumer) that gets its energy from eating meat/animal flesh
co-exist	living in the same environment
community	interaction of all living things in an area
condensation	change of a vapor of gas into a liquid (i.e. condensation on a glass of
concentration	lemonade in the summer) sensible use of the earth's resources to avoid harming the environment
conservation	
consumer *	an organism that gets its energy from eating other organisms types of consumers: herbivore, carnivore, omnivore
control *	part of an experiment that does not change, serves as the standard to
Control	compare other observations; example: in the pollution investigation, the
	one model ecosystem not undergoing pollution
deciduous	trees lose leaves in autumn/fall
decomposers	recycles matter and energy (examples from model ecosystem: aquarium
•	snail, isopod), keeps the community clean by eating the dead organisms
decomposition	the breaking down of an organism back into nature
degrade	to make worse, harm
dependent relationships *	relying on another; for example, plants rely on the sun for light
desert	little rain, extreme temperatures, drought resistant grass
	plants: sagebrush, cacti (adapted to conditions)
	animals: kangaroo rat, snakes, lizards, some birds, spiders, insects
ecology *	study of the relationships between organisms and their environment; a
accuratem *	scientist in this area is called an ecologist
ecosystem *	an interconnected community of all living things in an area and their habitat (includes living and nonliving)
	abiotic factors + biotic factors = an ecosystem
environment *	everything that surrounds an organism and influences it
estuary	where freshwater and salt water meet (coastal area)
eutrophication	increased nutrients in an ecosystem (i.e. too much fertilizer)
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fortile * rich in nutrients; often used to describe soil food chain * a graphic that traces energy flow in an ecosystem; for example: sun → plants → fish → raccoon food web system of food chains forest * an area of land densely populated with trees includes streams, rivers, lakes, marshes, swamps Salt levels are low, important nutrient to land plants and animals, supports a wide variety of plant and animal life fungi helps in the natural recycling process, a decomposer germination * process by which seeds swell up and begin to sprout and develop roots a large, flat, area of land that is mostly populated by tall grasses and few trees; also called savannus, rainfall is low or seasonal, dominant plant life is grass; other plants: buffalo grass, sunflower, goldenrods, clover large herbivores bison, antelope, zebras, prairie dogs physical place where an organism lives herbivore * consumer that gets its energy by eating plants and vegetation interdependent relying on one another. For example, elodea is a producer that provides food for a small. It also provides shelter for hiding and laying eggs and adding oxygen to the water. The snall also gives off carbon dioxide, which plants use for photosynthesis. Isopods small animals with a segmented thorax, each part of the thorax has its own pair of legs marine ecosystems includes ocean areas and seas, high salt content, warmer, lots of sunlight near surface (examples: coral recfs, tide pools, beaches, ocean floor) Representation of objects, processes, or phenoment hat look like, function like, describe, or explain the real thing; simplified version of the real object that helps us understand how things work niche * the specific role an organism plays within its ecosystem nutrients substance required to nourish an organism photosynthesis * living things ph measured on a scale of 0-14, where 7 is neutral (distilled water), 0-6 includes acid (orange juice), 7-14 includes basic (fertilizer, ammonia) the measured on a scale acid (orange juice), 7-14 includes basic (f	fair test *	changing only one variable and keeping the other conditions the same
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from the sun, example: plants	producer *	
radiation * a way that energy is transferred from the sun to the earth		
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recycle	reusing materials
scavenger	feeds on dead organic matter that could have been killed by a predator
secondary consumers	get energy from primary consumers
sediment *	tiny bits of soil that are often transported by water or wind
taiga	located in parts of Canada, Europe and Asia; has evergreen <i>coniferous</i> forests (trees with cones), soil is acidic and difficult for plants to grow, ground covered in snow most of year, animals grow thick fur animals: moose, deer, mice, porcupines, snowshoe hares
temperate forest	the biome where we live, deciduous trees (trees that lose their leaves), medium rainfall, foliage changes color in autumn (fall) trees: redbud, oak, maple, pine, dogwood, pine animals: squirrels, deer, foxes, bears
terrarium *	a closed glass or plastic container where terrestrial organisms can live and be observed
terrestrial *	having to do with the land or earth
tertiary consumers	get their energy from secondary consumers
toxin	poison produced by a living organism
trade-off *	the act of giving up one thing in order to get another
tropical rain forest	abundant rainfall, very humid, trees have dense canopies, floor does not get much sunlight, many species of animals and plants plants: vines, ferns, orchids, large and small trees animals: orangutans, insects, sloths, jaguars
tundra	treeless biome, below the soil is a thin layer of permafrost (permanently frozen ground), located near the northernmost part of earth, summer temperatures are around freezing, grasses and small trees are present, mosses and lichens grow well animals: reindeer, caribou, polar bears, arctic wolves, ptarmigans
variable *	the part of an experiment that is changed or tested; in this case, the variable is the addition of a pollutant (salt, fertilizer, vinegar)
water cycle	evaporation, condensation, precipitation; continual process
watershed *	an area of land where the waters all drain into the same place