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| Vocabulary Word | Definition |
| Abiotic factors | nonliving parts of an ecosystem (sunlight, soil, temperature) |
| Adaptation | a change in order to fit a new situation or use |
| Aquarium | a closed glass or plastic container where aquatic (water) 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) |
| Carnivores | consumer that eats meat |
| Co-exist | living in the same environment |
| Community | interaction of all living things in an area |
| Conservation | sensible use of the earth’s resources to avoid harming the environment |
| Consumers | living things that eat food (i.e. animals)  types of consumers: herbivore, carnivore, omnivore |
| 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 |
| 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 |
| Ecosystem | 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) |
| Food chain | a picture that shows how each organism gets energy |
| Food web | system of food chains |
| Freshwater ecosystems | 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 |
| Germinate | the process of a seed beginning to sprout r beginning to grow into a plant |
| Grasslands | also called savannas, rainfall is low or seasonal, dominant plant life is  grass; other plants: buffalo grass, sunflower, goldenrods, clover  large herbivores: bison, antelope, zebras, prairie dogs |
| Habitat | physical place where an organism lives |
| Herbivores | consumer that eats plants |
| Interdependence | the relationship between plants and animals in an ecosystem |
| 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 reefs, tide pools, beaches, ocean floor) |
| Niche | position of an organism in a community of plants and animals |
| Nutrients | substance required to nourish an organism |
| Omnivores | consumers that eat both plants and animals |
| Organisms | 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) |
| Photosynthesis | chemical process where plants make their own food |
| Pollutant | substance with damaging effects on the environment (i.e. acid rain, overfertilization, road salt) |
| Pollution | putting harmful things into the environment |
| Population | a group of the same type of organism living in an area |
| Predator | an animal that eats another animal for food |
| Prey | the animal that gets eaten |
| Primary consumers | use plants for energy (anything that eats plants)  examples: insects, fish, lizards, mice, birds, deer |
| Producers | makes own food, gets energy from the Sun, example: plants |
| Radiation | A way that heat energy can travel. Radiation occurs when heat energy leaves its source and travels through water or air to reach its destination. |
| Scavenger | feeds on dead organic matter that could have been killed by a predator |
| Secondary consumers | get energy from primary consumers |
| Taiga | located in parts of Canada, Europe and Asia; has evergreen coniferous  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 rainforest | 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 (land) organisms can live and be observed |
| Terrestrial | land |
| Tertiary consumers | get their energy from secondary consumers |
| Toxin | poison produced by a living organism |
| Tropical rainforest | 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 |