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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 grassplants: 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, swampsSalt 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, cloverlarge 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 coniferousforests (trees with cones), soil is acidic and difficult for plants to grow, ground covered in snow most of year, animals grow thick furanimals: 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, pineanimals: 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 plantsplants: vines, ferns, orchids, large and small treesanimals: 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 wellanimals: reindeer, caribou, polar bears, arctic wolves, ptarmigans |