

## ECOLOGY VOCABULARY

**Ecology**- the study of how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.

**Biotic**- living factors in the environment (plants, animals)

**Abiotic**-nonliving parts of the environment (water, air, temperature, soil, etc)

**Organism**-a single living thing (plant, animal, bacterium, protist, or fungus)

**Population**-group of the same species living in the same area

**Community**- all populations that live in the same area and interact with each other

**Ecosystem**- a community of organisms and their environment

**Biosphere**- all ecosystems on earth

**Niche**- the job of an organism

**Producers**- organisms that use sunlight to make food (plants)

**Consumers**- organisms that eat other organisms

**Herbivore**- eats only plants (consumer)

**Carnivore**- eats only animals (consumer)

**Omnivore**- eats plants and animals (consumer)

**Scavenger**- eats dead organisms (consumer)

**Decomposers**- get energy by breaking down dead organisms

**Bacteria**-tiny one celled decomposer

**Fungi**-multicellular decomposer (Molds, mildews. yeasts. mushrooms, and puffballs)

**Food chain**- diagram of energy flow from one organism to another (simple)

**Food web**- diagram showing feeding relationships in an ecosystem

**Energy pyramid**- diagram that shows energy loss in an environment

**Limiting factors**- a resource that is so scarce that it limits the size of a population  
[food, water in a desert, space]

**Carrying capacity**- the largest population that an environment can support

**Competition**- when 2 or more organisms try to use the same resource.

**Predator**-the eater (carnivore)

**Prey**-the victim

**Symbiosis**- a close long term association between 2 or more species

**Mutualism**- both organisms benefit (good)

**Commensalism**- one organism benefits and the other is unaffected

**Parasitism**- one organism benefits and the other is harmed

**Parasite**-the invader

**Host**-the victim of the parasite

**Evolution**-the change in a species over time

**Biodiversity**-the great variety of life forms on the planet

**Territory**-the "property" of an organism

**Natural balance**-the idea that producers, consumers and decomposers live in an equal and harmonious state

**Dependence**- reliance on another organism for survival

**Detrimental**- bad effect

**Beneficial**- good effect