

Ecology Vocabulary Words

- 1. Abiotic factor** - A non-living part of an ecosystem. Ex: water, sunlight, climate
- 2. Biosphere** - The biosphere is the part of the earth, including air, land, surface rocks, and water, within which life occurs
- 3. Biotic factor** - A living part of an ecosystem. Ex: plants, animals (birds), insects (worms)
- 4. Carnivore** - An animal that eats only other animals
- 5. Carrying capacity** - The largest population that an area can support
- 6. Combustion** - The process of burning fuel, such as oil and coal
- 7. Commensalism** - A symbiotic relationship in which one organism benefits and the other is unaffected
- 8. Community** - All the different populations that live together in an area
- 9. Competition** - Organisms compete for the limited number of biotic and abiotic factors
- 10. Consumer** - An organism that obtains energy by feeding on other organisms. Ex: herbivores, carnivores, scavengers, (we are consumers)
- 11. Decomposer** - Organisms that benefit an ecosystem by returning nutrients to the soil and by breaking down dead organisms "Nature's recyclers", bacteria and fungi
- 12. Ecology** - The study of how living things interact with each other and their environment
- 13. Ecosystem** - All the living (biotic) and non-living (abiotic) things that interact in an area
- 14. Evaporation** - The process by which molecules of a liquid absorb energy and change to the gas state
- 15. Energy pyramid** - A diagram that shows the amount of energy that moves from one feeding level to another in a food web. One of three ways in which energy moves through an ecosystem. As you move upward, from level to level, in an energy pyramid, energy decreases. The greatest amount of energy in an ecosystem is available to producers
- 16. Exponential Growth** - If a population has a constant birth rate through time and is never limited by food or disease, it has what is known as exponential growth. With exponential growth the birth rate alone controls how fast (or slow) the population grows.
- 17. Food chain** - A series of events in which one organism eats another. One of three ways in which energy moves through an ecosystem

- 18. Food web** - The pattern of overlapping food chains in an ecosystem. One of three ways in which energy moves through an ecosystem. A model of feeding relationships
- 19. Habitat** - The environment in which an organism lives
- 20. Herbivore** - An animal that eats only plants. Organism that obtains energy ONLY from producers
- 21. Host** - An organism that provides a source of energy or a suitable environment for a virus or for another organism to live
- 22. Limiting factors** - Anything that restricts the number of individuals living in a population
- 23. Mutualism** - A symbiotic relationship in which both organisms benefit
- 24. Niche** - An organism's particular role in an ecosystem, or how it makes its living (what it eats, when it eats, etc.)
- 25. Nitrogen fixation** - Process that converts nitrogen gas into a form that plants can use
- 26. Omnivore** - An animal that eats both plants and animals
- 27. Parasite** - An organism that lives on or in a host and causes harm to the host
- 28. Parasitism** - A symbiotic relationship in which one organism benefits while the other is harmed
- 29. Photosynthesis** - A process in which light energy becomes chemical energy using carbon dioxide and water
- 30. Population** - Organisms of one species living together in the same place at the same time
- 31. Precipitation** - Rain, snow, sleet or hail
- 32. Predation** - An interaction in which one organism hunts and kills another animal for food
- 33. Predator** - A carnivore that hunts and kills other animals for food and has adaptations that help it capture the animals it preys upon
- 34. Prey** - An animal that the predator feeds upon
- 35. Producer** - Organisms that use sunlight to make food
- 36. Respiration** - A process that uses oxygen in organisms (like animals) to break down simple food molecules to produce energy
- 37. Species** - A group of similar organisms whose members can mate with one another and produce fertile offspring
- 38. Symbiosis** - A close relationship between two organisms in which at least one of the organisms benefits
- 39. Transpiration** - The process by which water is lost through a plant's leaves