

Lesson 2.2 Glossary

B

Birth rate – The ratio between births and individuals in a specific population at a particular time. They are typically reported as the number of births per 1000 individuals per year.

C

Carrying capacity – Maximum population of a particular species that a given habitat can support over a given period of time.

Conceptual model – A diagram or other pictorial representation of the components of a system that enables observation and clarification of the relationship among those components.

Consumer – Organism that cannot synthesize the organic nutrients it needs and gets its organic nutrient by feeding on the tissues of producers or of other consumers.

D

Death rate – The ratio between deaths and individuals in a specific population at a particular time. They are typically reported as the number of deaths per 1000 individuals per year.

Decomposer – An organism that uses dead organic material as its source of energy. By feeding on and breaking down this material, decomposers release inorganic nutrients needed by many plants and other producer organisms.

E

Ecosystem functions – The biological, geochemical, and physical processes and components that take place or occur within an ecosystem.

Ecosystem services – Natural services that support life on earth.

F

Food chain – A sequence of plants and animals that feed on each other.

Food web – The dependence of organisms on others in a series for food.

Functional diversity – Biological and chemical processes or functions such as energy flow and matter cycling that are needed for the survival of species and biological communities.

I

Interdependent – Mutually dependent or dependent on each other.

L

Limiting factor – A component in a system that prevents further changes in a particular variable.

M

Mathematical model – A quantitative description of the relationship between two or more variables, often expressed as an equation.

Model – Any representation of a system or its components.

N

Natural resources – The elements of supply inherent to an area that can be used to satisfy the needs of people, including air, soil, water, native vegetation, minerals, wildlife, etc.

P

Population – The total number of organisms of a particular species occupying a given ecosystem at a given time.

Primary consumer – An animal that eats plants.

Producer – A green plant that converts solar energy and other plant nutrients to starches and sugars.

S

Secondary consumer – A carnivorous animal that obtains its nutrition by eating primary consumers.

T

Trophic level – A feeding level in an ecosystem.