

Glossary

Biodiversity: Variety of different species (*species diversity*), genetic variability among individuals within each species (*genetic diversity*), variety of ecosystems (*ecological diversity*), and functions such as energy flow and matter cycling needed for the survival of species and biological communities (*functional diversity*).

Biogeochemical Cycles: Natural processes that recycle nutrients in various chemical forms from the nonliving environment to living organisms and then back to the nonliving environment. Examples include the carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, phosphorus, sulfur, and hydrologic cycles

Carrying Capacity (*K*): Maximum population of a particular species that a given habitat can support over a given period.

Ecology: Ecology is the study of the relationships between living organisms and their physical environment.

Ecological Succession: Process in which communities of plant and animal species in a particular area are replaced over time by a series of different and often more complex communities.

Ecosystem : An ecosystem is a collection of all the organisms that live in a particular area along with their nonliving, physical environment.

Ecotone: The transition zone from one to another type of ecosystem

Habitat fragmentation: Breakup of a habitat into smaller pieces, usually as a result of human activities.

Hydrologic Cycle: Biogeochemical cycle that collects, purifies, and distributes the earth's fixed supply of water from the environment to living organisms and then back to the environment.

Land Degradation: Decrease in the ability of land to support crops, livestock, or wild species in the future as a result of natural or human-induced processes.

Limiting factor: Any factor or condition that limits the growth, abundance, or distribution of the population of a species in an ecosystem.