

Glossary

Adaptation - A change in an organism in response to a change in its environment, resulting in it being better able to survive.

Algae - Simple plants found in water, lacking a true stem, leaves or roots.

Anadromous - Referring to fish, like salmon, that live in salt water but return to fresh water to lay eggs.

Artifact - An object shaped by human workmanship; especially, a simple tool, weapon, or ornament of archaeological or historical interest.

Auger - A hollow, cylindrical tool used for boring into the earth and removing soil samples, used in archaeology and some tree planting.

Biodiversity - The large variety of living organisms on earth.

Bivalve - A mollusc with two shells, such as clams or mussels.

Canopy - The layer formed by the leaves and branches of the forest's tallest trees.

Condensation - With regard to the water cycle, the change of water vapor into a liquid and the formation of tiny droplets in clouds.

Conifer - A plant that bears its seeds in cones.

Conservation - Planned management of a natural resource to maintain that resource for the long-term future.

Density - The amount of matter (mass) per unit volume.

Detritus - Fine particles made up of the remains of plants and animals and the disintegration of rocks, either in suspension in water or settled onto the bottom.

Ecosystem - A community of species and their physical environment.

Eelgrass - A long-bladed, grasslike, marine plant that grows on sand and mud/sand bottoms in shallow coastal waters.

Epiphyte - A plant that grows on another plant or object upon which it depends for mechanical support but not as a source of nutrients.

Evaporation - With regard to the water cycle, change of water from liquid to vapor as a result of heat from the sun; puts water vapor into the air.

Estuary - The area where the fresh water of a river mixes with the salt water of the sea.

Forest floor - The layer of decomposing material that covers the soil in a forest.

Food chain - A diagram showing a group of organisms so interrelated that each member of the group feeds upon the one below it, and is in turn eaten by the organism above it.

Food web - A group of interrelated food chains in a particular community.

Glacial Erratic - Rocks carried by glaciers and deposited in areas of a different rock type.

Groundwater - Underground water found as a layer between saturated soil and rock that supplies wells and springs.

Habitat - An environment or area which supplies the needs of animals and/or plants.

Harvest - The intentional gathering of plants, animals or other natural resources for human use.

Intertidal - The area of the beach between low and high tide.

Invertebrate - An animal without a backbone, like clams, crabs, oysters, shrimp, sea stars, barnacles.

Law of original horizontality - The geologic principle which states that materials are deposited in horizontal layers.

Mantle - In oysters, clams and snails, the part of the body that lines the shell, covering the internal organs.

Midden - A refuse heap of a primitive inhabitation often containing artifacts, shells, and/or animal bones.

Native plants - Plants that occur naturally in an ecosystem, not as a result of human intervention.

Nitrogen fixing - The ability to take nitrogen from the atmosphere and convert it to a form usable by plants.

Overstory - The uppermost layer in a forest or woodland, consisting of the crowns of trees or shrubs.

Plankton - Plants and animals that drift in the water, generally microscopic.

Plate - Part of the solid outside layer of the earth. Plates float on the molten rock and can change their position relative to each other.

Precipitation - With regard to the water cycle, rain, hail, snow which forms when clouds meet cold air and the condensed water droplets become too heavy to remain in the atmosphere and fall to earth.

Principle of superposition - The geologic principle which states that when the layers are horizontal, or nearly so, each overlying layer is younger than the one beneath it.

Principle of uniformitarianism - The geologic principle which states that the processes (erosion, deposition of sediments, etc.) which we observe today have been occurring throughout the history.

Runoff - Water that has fallen as rain and which moves downhill on the surface of the earth.

Salinity - The measure of the quantity of dissolved salts in seawater.

Spat - A young oyster, newly attached to a shell or rock.

Species - Populations of related individuals that can produce offspring.

Tide - The twice-daily rise and fall of the waters of the ocean and its inlets, produced by the combined gravitational attractions of the moon and sun.

Transpiration - movement of water in a plant from the roots, through the stem and out through stomata on the leaves.

Understory - The lower layer of plants in a forest or woodland which grow beneath the forest canopy or overstory.

Water cycle - The cycle by which water evaporates from oceans, lakes, and other bodies of water, forms clouds, and is returned to the bodies of water in the form of rain and snow, the runoff from rain or snow, and/or groundwater.

Watershed - All the land which drains into a river or body of water.