



Key Vocabulary Words

Amphibian — amphibia is a Greek word meaning “double life.” Nearly all amphibious life starts in the water and later spends the rest of life on land. Amphibians include all frogs, toads, newts, salamanders and a few species of tropical, burrowing, legless creatures which look like worms. Amphibians are cold-blooded, have thin, moist skin, are generally egg layers, and go through a metamorphic stage. They develop from a larval stage to adult; thus they breathe with gills at some point in their development.

Antler — the branched, deciduous horn on animals of the deer family.

Bird — warm-blooded vertebrates with a covering of feathers, which is the one characteristic that differentiates them from any other animal.

Carnivore — meat eater

Chlorofluorocarbon (CFCs) — gas used as a propellant in aerosols that is thought to modify the ozone layer in the stratosphere, thereby allowing more harmful solar radiation to reach the earth's surface.

Cold-blooded — having a body temperature similar to that of the environment, such as reptiles and amphibians; ectothermic.

Ecosystem — all of the living things in a particular environment, plus the nonliving factors in that environment. The nonliving factors include such things as the soil type, rainfall and amount of sunlight.

Endangered species — a species with so few living members that it will soon become extinct unless measures are undertaken to slow its decline.

Exotic species — non-native species that are introduced into a country or specific area from the outside.

Extinct — died out. No longer found. No longer exists in the wild.

Food chain — a group of organisms interrelated by the fact that each member of the group feeds upon the one below it and is in turn eaten by the organism above it in the chain.

Food web — interconnected food chains made up of many organisms, with many interrelationships.

Habitat — the biophysical surroundings in which an organism lives. A home.

Herbivore — plant eater.

Horn — hard, pointed, permanent outgrowth of epidermis, usually curved and paired, on the heads of some animals.

Niche — where an organism lives (habitat) and how it functions in this environment (i.e., what it eats, who its predators are, what activities it carries out).

Mammal — all mammals have hair at some stage in life. Females have milk-secreting glands, mammary glands from which the name evolved. A typical mammal is a warm-blooded, air-breathing, four-footed vertebrate with hairy skin, rich in glands.



Omnivore — an animal that eats both meat and plants; may include some invertebrates.

Population — the members of a species living together in a specific locality.

Reptile — the first true land-dwellers to evolve among the vertebrates. They have epidermal scales, no feathers or hair, and comparatively few skin glands. Because they have few skin glands, they do not stay moist like amphibians. Reptiles include turtles, tortoises, lizards, snakes, crocodiles and alligators.

Species — a group of organisms that are able to interbreed successfully (if they are given the opportunity to do so), produce fertile offspring that share ties of common parentage, and that share a common pool of hereditary material.

Threatened species — a species that is not yet endangered but whose populations are heading in that direction.

Warm-blooded — maintaining a constant body temperature regardless of the warmth or chill of the environment (i.e., mammals [including humans], birds); endothermic.