

## Vocabulary to Accompany Lesson Plans

**Abiotic factor:** A nonliving condition or thing that influences or affects an ecosystem and the organisms in it.

**Biotic factor:** Any living component that affects the population of another organism, or the environment.

**Biome:** A major ecological community of organisms adapted to a particular climatic or environmental condition on a large geographic area in which they occur.

**Characteristic:** A feature or quality particular to an animal or habitat.

**Carnivores:** Consumers that eat primary consumers.

**Competition:** A relationship that occurs when two or more organisms need the same resource at the same time.

**Consumers, or heterotrophs:** Organisms that obtain organic molecules by eating other organisms (i.e. eat others to feed themselves).

**Ecosystem:** A biological community of interacting organisms and their environment

**Ecological Niche:** The role an organism plays in its environment including type of food it eats, how it obtains its food and how it interacts with other organisms.

**Ecological pyramids:** Models that show how energy flows through ecosystems and the relative amounts of energy, biomass, or numbers of organisms at each trophic level in an ecosystem.

**Food Chain:** Is a linear sequence of organisms through which nutrients and energy pass as one organism eats another.

**Food Web:** Consists of many interconnected food chains and are a realistic representation of consumption relationships among organisms in ecosystems.

**Habitat:** The natural home and environment of an animal species

**Habitat Audit:** A habitat audit is an investigation of the habitat around a particular facility or in a particular area. It can be used as a basis for improving habitat in the area to be friendlier to local wildlife.

**Mammal:** Warm-blooded, vertebrate animals that are distinguished by possessing hair or fur, producing milk for their young, and giving birth to live young

**North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission:** The state agency responsible for conserving wildlife in North Carolina

**Omnivores:** Consumers that eat both producers and primary consumers.

**Organism:** A living thing (i.e. a thing that can react to stimuli, reproduce, grow, and maintain homeostasis).

**Predator:** An animal that naturally preys on others.

**Predation:** A type of interaction between species in which one species (the predator) eats the other (the prey). This interaction helps regulate the population within an ecosystem thereby causing it to become stable and such fluctuations can become predictable.

**Prey:** An animal that is hunted and killed by another for food.

**Primary consumer:** Organism that eats only the producers.

**Producers or autotrophs:** Organisms that make their own organic molecules, which allows them to function (i.e. feed themselves).

**Quaternary consumer:** Organism that eats the tertiary consumers.

**Secondary consumer:** Organism that eats the primary consumers.

**Species:** A group of organisms that have similar individuals capable of exchanging genes or interbreeding and is the lowest group in the Linnaeus classification system.

**Tertiary consumer:** Organism that eats the secondary consumers.

**Trophic level:** Hierarchical energy levels in an ecosystem that comprise of organisms that share similar functions in a food chain and nutritional relationships to the primary sources of energy.

