**Unit VIII Vocabulary: Ecology**

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| 1. Abiotic factor | Non-living factor that affects an ecosystem in some way; examples: sunlight, water |
| 1. Biotic factor | Living factor that affects an ecosystem in some way; examples: predators, prey |
| 1. Niche | An organism’s role in an environment |
| 1. Symbiosis | An association between two organisms of different species (living closely together) |
| 1. Mutualism | A type of symbiosis in which both species benefit; example: insects and flowering plants |
| 1. Parasitism | A type of symbiosis in which one species benefits and the other is harmed; example: dogs and ticks |
| 1. Commensalism | A type of symbiosis in which one species benefits from the relationship and the other organism does not benefit or harm from the relationship; example: orchids and tree branches |
| 1. Autotroph (producers) | Organism that makes its own food (bottom of energy pyramid); has the most available energy; example: plants |
| 1. Heterotroph (consumers) | Organism that must get food energy from other sources (higher levels of energy pyramid); example: humans |
| 1. Trophic level | Level or step in a food chain or web (troph = food); examples: autotroph, heterotroph |
| 1. Exponential growth | Population growth exhibited when a population has unlimited resources and is free to reproduce (J-shaped curve) |
| 1. Logistic growth | Population growth exhibited when a population’s resources run out and growth slows or stops (S-shaped curve) |
| 1. Density dependent factor | A factor affecting an ecosystem relative to size; example: food, space and other limited resources |
| 1. Density independent factor | A factor affecting an ecosystem regardless of size; example: weather, climate, natural disasters |
| 1. Carrying capacity | The maximum number of organisms an environment can support due to available resources |
| 1. Gymnosperm | Vascular plant that produces cones |
| 1. Angiosperm | Vascular plant that produces flowers and fruits (seeds contained in an ovary) |
| 1. Xylem | Type of vascular tissue that transports water from the roots through the stem and to the leaves of a plant |
| 1. Phloem | Type of vascular tissue that transports sugar and other dissolved nutrients throughout a plant |
| 1. Innate behavior | Instinctive behavior with which species are born with; examples: suckling, hibernation, imprinting, parental behavior toward young) |
| 1. Learned behavior | Behavior that is acquired through experience; examples: chimpanzee using tools to accomplish a task, classical conditioning |
| 1. Social behavior | Behavior among members of the same species; examples: courtship and in some cases, territorial or aggressive |
| 1. Biosphere | The part of the earth where living things exist. |
| 1. Scavenger | Organism that eat the remains of organisms that were killed by another organism |
| 1. Decomposer | Organism that consumes an organism that has broken down |
| 1. Predation | Organism that consumes another organism |