

Terms to Know

1. *Ecology*: The study of organisms in their physical environment.
2. *Population*: All the members of the same species in the same area at the same time.
3. *Community*: All the populations of organisms in the same area at the same time.
4. *Ecosystem*: The community and the physical environment in which it is found.
5. *Food chain*: "Who eats whom"; the pattern by which organisms obtain energy
6. *Food web*: A more accurate description of how organisms obtain energy.
7. *Autotroph*: An organism which can "make" its own food, typically through photosynthesis. A **producer**.
8. *Heterotroph*: An organism which must obtain food energy from another organism. A **consumer**: herbivore, carnivore, decomposer.
9. *Phytoplankton*: Tiny autotrophs living in water. Most important part of an aquatic food web.
10. *Zooplankton*: Tiny heterotrophs living in water.
11. *Detritus*: Dead organisms and parts of organisms, like dead leaves, logs, animal bodies, etc. Broken down by **decomposers**, such as bacteria, fungi, earthworms.
12. *Succession*: Pattern of replacement of organisms in an area which has been disturbed or in a "new" barren area. **Primary succession** occurs in barren areas, such as strip-mined ground or lava flows. **Secondary succession** occurs in disturbed areas, such as old farms, fire- or wind-damaged forests, etc.
13. *Dominant species*: The major kind of organism--usually plant--in any community.
14. *Pioneer species*: The first kinds of species to colonize a disturbed or barren area. What starts succession
15. *Climax community*: "Stable" major plant life in a community when succession is complete, if that ever happens. In this area, the climax community is deciduous forest with hickory, oak, maple, buckeye, walnut, etc.