

Glossary

acid rain Rain that is more acidic than normal.

Most lakes and streams have a pH of 6 to 8. Acid rain has a pH of 4.2 to 5.6. The acid rain falls into lakes and streams. Many aquatic plants and animals cannot survive in the polluted water.

algae bloom An increase in the growth of algae. The increase is often caused by pollutants. When the algae die and decompose, oxygen in the water is used up. Without oxygen, fish and other living things in the aquatic habitat die, too.

anacharis An aquatic plant that absorbs water directly into its leaves. Anacharis is also called elodea. Because it absorbs water directly into its leaves, it does not always have roots.

community Populations of different kinds of organisms that live in the same place at the same time. A community includes all the living things in one place. An aquatic community might be made up of populations of worms, snails, daphnia, cattails, duckweed, catfish, sunfish, insects, turtles, and frogs.

daphnia A tiny animal related to shrimp that lives in fresh water. Daphnia are also called "water fleas" because they seem to jump around. Many organisms in freshwater habitats eat daphnia.

decomposer An organism that feeds on dead organisms. Molds, bacteria, and snails are decomposers in aquatic ecosystems. They break down the dead organisms and release nutrients into the ecosystem for use by plants. All food chains end with decomposers.

ecosystem All the living and nonliving things that interact with each other in an environment. Living things in an ecosystem include plants and animals. Nonliving things in an ecosystem include sunlight, soil, water, and air.

food chain The path of food energy from one organism to another in an ecosystem. Producers such as plants are the first living link in a food chain. They produce their own food using energy from the sun. When an insect eats a plant and then a frog eats the insect, energy is passed along the food chain.

food web Overlapping food chains with different paths for the flow of energy in an ecosystem. Each animal in an ecosystem eats many different things. A guppy, for example, eats daphnia and worms. A bigger fish might eat guppies and insects. A food web shows how these food chains overlap.

fossil The remains or traces of an organism that lived long ago. A fossil might be a bone from an ancient animal or a set of its footprints. Fossils help scientists figure out what ancient organisms looked like and how they lived.

habitat The place where an organism lives. Aquatic habitats may be in the salty ocean or in freshwater lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams. Terrestrial habitats are on land.

organism A living thing. Some organisms are very small, such as daphnia. Others are very big, such as whales. Some organisms live in water, while others live on land. No matter where they live, all organisms need certain things to survive, such as food, water, and shelter.

pH scale Measures how acidic a liquid is. The scale ranges from 0 to 14. Substances with a pH lower than 7 are acids. Substances with a pH higher than 7 are bases.

photosynthesis The process of using the energy in sunlight to make food from water and carbon dioxide. Plants can carry out photosynthesis. Because they make their own food, plants are called "producers."

Glossary (continued)

pollutant Anything in the environment that can harm living things or damage natural resources. Chemicals that are dumped into rivers can cause fish to die. Smoke can pollute air, harming all organisms that breathe the air. Garbage dumps pollute the land when harmful materials in them leak into water or soil.

population All the organisms of the same type that live in the same place at the same time. A population includes only living things. All the catfish in a pond make up one population. All the sunfish in the same pond make up another population. You and all the other people in your area make up a population of humans.

predator An animal that hunts, catches, and eats other live animals. Guppies are predators. They eat daphnia. Guppies also eat worms—and baby guppies!

prey An animal that is hunted, caught, and eaten by other animals. Daphnia are prey. They are eaten by guppies. Daphnia do not eat other animals. They eat algae.

producer An organism that makes its own food. Plants and algae are producers. They use the energy in sunlight to make food from carbon dioxide and water.