

## Vocabulary

**Abiotic Factors:** non-living (opposite to biotic), a term used for characteristics and elements of the environment that influence the survival or reproduction of organisms but are not alive (and never were alive) themselves. Examples are temperature, pH, light, nutrients, etc.

**Adaptation:** a trait that has a current functional role within the life of an organism that is maintained and evolved through natural selection. Adaptations are changes to a plant or an animal that help them survive better in their environment.

**Biotic Factors:** living or once living. Examples are living animals, dead remains, wood furniture, etc.

**Consumer:** any organism that eats another organism; heterotroph.

**Coral Reef Ecosystem:** generally found in nutrient poor, warm, shallow waters and characterized by reef-building corals home to a large diversity species. Reef-building corals are formed of colonies of thousands of identical coral animals (polyps) held together by a bony (calcium carbonate) skeleton.

**Ecosystem:** any area of nature that includes living organisms and nonliving substances interacting to produce an exchange of materials between the living and nonliving parts.

**Food Chain:** the transfer of food energy from the source (producer) through a series of organisms with repeated eating and being eaten.

**Food web:** a group of interrelated food chains.

**Intertidal Ecosystem:** found along the coast and composed of rocky pools that are above water at low tide and under water at high tide.

**Kelp Forest Ecosystem:** located in nutrient rich, cold, shallow waters formed by multiple species of large kelp in dense patches. Kelp forests provide food and shelter for thousands of species.

**Keystone Species:** are usually predatory. A species all other organisms in an ecosystem heavily depend on to keep the system in balance. Examples are sea stars, sea otters, parrot fish, sharks, etc.

**Marine Protected Area (MPA):** designated places in the ocean where plants and animals, and even shells and rocks, have special protections to keep them safe. They are often very beautiful places that we want to enjoy for years and years to come.

**Ocean acidification:** the reduction in the pH of the ocean over an extended period of time, caused primarily by uptake of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

**pH:** the “power of hydrogen”; scale from 0 – 14 that measures the concentration of hydrogen ions in a substance. pH ranging from 0 – 7 means the substance is acidic (tomatoes, battery acid), a value of 7 means the substance is neutral, and 7 – 14 means the substance is basic or alkaline (bile, detergent, soap). Seawater has a pH value of approximately 7.8 – 8.2.

**Producer:** an organism that makes its own food; autotroph.

**Scavenger:** an animal that eats something already dead or leftovers of another animal’s meal.