



Level 2: Grades 3–5

Glossary: Animals in the Natural World

- **aquatic** – growing or living in or frequenting water
- **biodiversity** – all the different life forms in a habitat or on Earth
- **biosphere** – the totality of all the ecosystems on Earth; all the organisms on Earth and their interactions with each other and their environments
- **bird of prey** – a meat-eating bird (as a hawk) that feeds partly or completely on the animals it hunts; vulture
- **burrow** – a hole or excavation in the ground made by an animal (as a rabbit) for shelter and habitation; to make a burrow
- **carnivore** – on the food chain, an animal who eats only meat
- **consumer** – on the food chain, a plant or animal that requires complex organic compounds for food that it obtains by preying on other living things or eating particles of organic matter
- **decomposer** – an organism (as a bacterium or a fungus) that feeds on and breaks down dead plant or animal matter
- **ecology** – the study of the interaction of Earth’s organisms with each other and with their environments
- **ecosystem** – an interacting system of all the living and nonliving components in a particular area
- **endangered species** – any species that is in danger of extinction in all or most of its range, or whose numbers are so small that the species is at risk of extinction
- **extinct** – no longer existing or living on Earth
- **food chain** – a system of checks and balances that describes the feeding patterns in an ecosystem; also called the food network or the trophic network
- **grassland** – land covered with herbs (as grasses and clover) rather than shrubs and trees; an ecological community in which the characteristic plants are grasses
- **habitat** – the local environment in which an organism lives
- **herbivore** – on the food chain, an animal who eats only plants
- **native species** – a species living or growing naturally in a particular region
- **non-native species** – a species that is introduced in a particular region that does not live or grow naturally in that region
- **omnivore** – on the food chain, an animal who eats both meat and plants
- **predator** – on the food chain, an animal who lives by killing and eating other animal
- **prey** – on the food chain, an animal hunted or killed by another animal for food
- **producer** – on the food chain, a living thing (such as a green plant) that makes its food from simple inorganic substances (such as carbon dioxide and nitrogen), many of which are food sources for other organisms
- **scavenger** – an organism (such as a vulture or hyena) that usually feeds on dead or decaying matter
- **species** – a category of biological classification for a group of organisms having common attributes; these organisms are potentially capable of interbreeding
- **terrestrial** – living on or in land
- **web of life** – the interaction of life forms that keeps life on Earth in balance
- **woodland** – land covered with trees and shrubs; forest