

## Ecology Terminology

**Ecosystem:** all the interacting parts of a biological community and its environment

**Sustainable Ecosystem:** an ecosystem that is capable of withstanding "pressure" and gives support to a variety of organisms

**Biotic:** the living parts of an ecosystem  
eg fish, aquatic plant, insect larva,  
phytoplankton (aquatic ecosystem)

**Abiotic:** the non-living parts of an ecosystem  
eg water, temperature, inorganic nutrients,  
sunlight, substrate (escarpment)

**Lithosphere:** the hard part of Earth's surface  
(earth's crust)

**Hydrosphere:** all the water found on Earth,  
including lakes, oceans, and ground water

**Atmosphere:** the layer of gases above Earth's surface, contains:

nitrogen	78.08 %
oxygen	20.95 %
argon	0.93 %
carbon dioxide	0.04 %
plus others	

**Biosphere:** the regions of earth where living organisms exist, thin layer of life, includes oceans

**Terrestrial Ecosystem:** any land based ecosystem

**Aquatic Ecosystem:** an ecosystem that occurs in water (lakes, oceans, streams)

**Autotroph:** (self feeding) any organism that is capable of producing its own food (food energy): all plants and phytoplankton and cyanobacteria

**Heterotroph:** (other feeding) any organism that eats other organisms

**Bioaccumulation:** occurs when a toxin enters a organism faster than the organism can excrete the toxin (or metabolize...)

**Bioamplification or Biomagnification:** occurs when toxins trapped in plant and animal tissues are passed upwards through the food chain. The animals higher on the food chain retain the toxins from their food and in this way end up with a higher toxin level than their prey.

**Producer:** any organism that is able to derive energy directly from the sun, all plants, phytoplankton and cyanobacteria, at the first trophic level

**Primary Consumer:** any organism that eats a producer, also known as a **herbivore**, at the second trophic level

**Secondary Consumer:** any organism that eats a primary consumer, also known as a **carnivore**, at the third trophic level

**Decomposer:** any organism that consumes dead plants or animals, eg are mushrooms, other fungus, bacteria, snails, some insects and worms

**Scavenger:** any animal (larger than decomposers) that eats dead animals or plants

**Detritus:** accumulation of abiotic and biotic material that makes up soil