

# Glossary

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## THE ORGANIZATION OF LIFE

### A

**abiotic** (ay bie AHT ik) **factor** an environmental factor that is not associated with the activities of living organisms

**adaptation** the process of becoming adapted to an environment; an anatomical, physiological, or behavioral change that improves a population's ability to survive

**angiosperm** (AN jee oh SPURM) a flowering plant that produces seeds within a fruit

**artificial selection** the selective breeding of organisms (by humans) for specific desirable characteristics

### B

**bacteria** extremely small, single-celled organisms that usually have a cell wall and reproduce by cell division (singular, *bacterium*)

**biotic factor** an environmental factor that is associated with or results from the activities of living organisms

### C

**community** a group of various species that live in the same habitat and interact with each other

### E

**ecosystem** (EE koh SIS tuhm) a community of organisms and their abiotic environment

**evolution** a change in the characteristics of a population from one generation to the next; the gradual development of organisms from other organisms since the beginnings of life

### F

**fungus** an organism whose cells have nuclei, rigid cell walls, and no chlorophyll and that belongs to the kingdom Fungi

### G

**gymnosperm** (JIM noh SPURM) a woody vascular seed plant whose seeds are not enclosed by an ovary or fruit

## H

**habitat** the place where an organism usually lives

## I

**invertebrate** (in VUHR tuh brit) an animal that does not have a backbone

## N

**natural selection** the process by which individuals that have favorable variations and are better adapted to their environment survive and reproduce more successfully than less well adapted individuals do

## O

**organism** a living thing; anything that can carry out life processes independently

## P

**population** a group of organisms of the same species that live in a specific geographical area and interbreed

**protist** an organism that belongs to the kingdom Protista

## R

**resistance** in biology, the ability of an organism to tolerate a chemical or disease-causing agent

## S

**species** a group of organisms that are closely related and can mate to produce fertile offspring; also the level of classification below genus and above subspecies

## V

**vertebrate** an animal that has a backbone; includes mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish