

Glossary

UNDERSTANDING POPULATIONS

C

carrying capacity the largest population that an environment can support at any given time

commensalism a relationship between two organisms in which one organism benefits and the other is unaffected

competition the relationship between two species (or individuals) in which both species (or individuals) attempt to use the same limited resource such that both are negatively affected by the relationship

D

density the number of individuals of the same species that live in a given unit of area

dispersion in ecology, the pattern of distribution of organisms in a population

E

exponential growth logarithmic growth, or growth in which numbers increase by a certain factor in each successive time period

G

growth rate an expression of the increase in the size of an organism or population over a given period of time

L

limiting resource a particular natural resource that, when limited, determines the carrying capacity of an ecosystem for a particular species

M

mutualism a relationship between two species in which both species benefit

N

niche (NICH) the unique position occupied by a species, both in terms of its physical use of its habitat and its function within an ecological community

P

parasitism a relationship between two species in which one species, the parasite, benefits from the other species, the host, and usually harms the host

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

predation an interaction between two species in which one species, the predator, feeds on the other species, the prey

R

reproductive potential the maximum number of offspring that a given organism can produce

S

symbiosis a relationship in which two different organisms live in close association with each other