**DEFINITIONS**

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| **abiotic** | the non-living components of an ecosystem (soils, climate, air, water) |
| **abundance** | the number of species in a given area |
| **adaptation** | a genetically determined characteristic of form, function or behaviour that makes an organism suited to live in its environment |
| **autotroph** | an organism that is able to synthesise organic matter from inorganic nutrients and a source of energy. most plants and some bacteria are autotrophs |
| **allelopathy** | allelopathy literally means “hurting each other” and in plant biology refers to the chemical by-products of one plant inhibiting the growth of another |
| **biomass** | the mass of living matter in a particular area |
| **biosphere** | the life-supporting layer of the earth extending from the upper atmosphere into the soil |
| **biota** | the living component (both plants and animals) usually of a particular region |
| **commensalism** | a close relationship between two organisms such that one derives food and/or shelter from the other |
| **community** | an assemblage of interacting populations of plants, animals, bacteria and fungi sharing a common environment |
| **competition** | the striving for the use of common resources between or within species |
| **consumer** | and organism that feed on other organisms (plants or animals) or on organic matter (dead organisms, detritus) |
| **distribution** | the geographic occurrence of a population or species |
| **diversity** | the number of species in a given area |
| **ecology** | the study of ways that organisms interact with each other and with their abiotic environment  |
| **ecosystem** | a system of ecological relationships |
| **environment** | all the living and non-living components that constitute and organisms surroundings |
| **epicormic buds** | dormant organs of vegetative growth on a stem |
| **eutrophication** | the enrichment of lakes and waterways as a result of the leaching of nutrients. this often causes an excessive growth of aquatic plants. it is commonly produced by effluents such as fertilisers and sewage |
| **exotic** | a plant or animal introduced form another region |
| **food chain** | a simple series representing the transfer of food and energy from plants through herbivores to carnivores |
| **food web** | a net of interwoven food chains |
| **forest** | a plant community dominated by trees where the canopy of the trees shades more than 30% of the ground |

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| **genus** | a taxonomic group of closely related species eg. Eucalyptus, Acacia |
| **herbivore** | an animal which feed upon living plants |
| **larva** | the immature form at birth or hatching of some groups of animals such as insects, molluscs and frogs, requiring metamorphosis to reach adult form |
| **micro climate** | the meteorological conditions, or climate, in a small area |
| **micro habitat** | the different parts of the habitat that an individual encounters |
| **mutualism** | symbiosis which advantages both species |
| **niche** | the place or role of an organism in a community; all the components of the environment with which an organism interacts |
| **organism** | any living thing |
| **parasite** | an organism that consumes part of the tissue of its host |
| **perennial** | a regular event; usually an herbaceous plant or shrub which lives from year to year |
| **photosynthesis** | production by plants of organic compounds from water and carbon dioxide using energy absorbed from light |
| **quadrat** | a sampling frame, or an area marked out for sampling flora and fauna in a study area |
| **respiration** | breathing; the oxidation of organic molecules within a cell to release energy |
| **sclerophyll** | hard-leathery leaves that aid in moisture retention – usually applied to eucalypt forests and woodlands |
| **species** | a group of similar individuals that are capable of interbreeding and producing fertile offspring |
| **succession** | the process by which one plant community replaces another |
| **symbiosis** | usually refers to a mutually beneficial relationship between species, but may include parasitism and commensalism |
| **terrestrial** | relating to the land |
| **transect** | a line or narrow strip, used in censuses of organisms in a given area |
| **transpiration** | evaporation of water from plants, usually the leaves |
| **trophic** | refers to nutrition |
| **trophic level** | position in the food chain; primary consumers (herbivores) are on the first trophic level, secondary consumers (carnivores) are on the second or third levels |
| **wetland** | an area of low lying land that is irregularly, regularly or permanently covered with either fresh or salt water |
| **woodland** | plant communities dominated by trees whose canopies shade less than 30% of the ground |

**Definitions drawn substantially from *A Natural Legacy,* Pergamon 1986**