



Natural Inquirer Comprehensive Glossary



Note: Words *italicized* in this glossary refer to other words contained in the glossary.



absorb: To attract and take in another substance.

abundant: Many.

acidic: Acid forming (Acid is a substance with a pH less than 7).

adapt: To change so as to fit new conditions.

aerial: Of or in the air.

algae: Simple plants that have no true root, stem, or leaf and that usually grow in water or on damp surfaces.

alpine: High mountain area above where trees can grow.

altitude: Height; especially, the height above sea level.

amphibian: Group of cold blooded animals with a backbone that live both in water and on land.

anaerobic: Existing in the absence of oxygen.

analysis: Separating something into its parts to examine it.

analyze: To separate something into its parts in order to examine them.

ancestor: An early kind of animal from which later kinds have developed.

annual: Covering the period of one year.

antenna: A set of wires used to send and receive signals.

aquatic: Growing or living in or upon water.

aquifer: Sand, gravel, or bedrock that contains a high amount of water; An underground reservoir.

arid: Dry.

associated: Closely connected with another.

assumption: Anything taken for granted.

astronomer: A scientist who studies the stars, planets, comets, etc.

average: The usual kind or amount. The number gotten by dividing the sum of two or more quantities by the number of quantities added.

backpacking: Camping by carrying food and equipment on one's back.

bacteria: Living things that only have one cell and can only be seen using a microscope.

barren: Not producing crops, fruit, or many trees.

biodiversity: A measure of the differences between the types and numbers of living things in a natural area.

biological: Having to do with plants and animals.

biological diversity: A measure of the differences between the types and numbers of living things in a natural area.

biomass: All the living things in a particular area.

biome: An area of earth with similar plants and animals because of its climate.

boreal: Relating to a northern climate, with long, cold, and dry winters. The trees in a boreal forest are evergreen.

breeding birds: Birds living in an area who are also breeding and raising their young there.

breeding habitat: Environment where an animal nests and reproduces as opposed to where it lives during the rest of the year.

broadleaf: Flat broad leaves.

canker: An open sore.

canopy: Anything that covers like a roof. On a tree, the area of leaves that cover the ground.

carbohydrate: Any of a group of substances made up of carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen, including sugars and starches.

carbon dioxide: A gas made up of carbon and oxygen with no color or smell.

case study: A particular event or story used as a learning tool.

category: A division of a main subject or group.

cavity: A hollowed out space.

census: An official count of all the people in a country, including other information such as their sex, age, and occupation.

characteristic: The special character or trait of some person or thing.

classify: To arrange by putting into groups according to some system.

climate: The average condition of the weather over large areas, over a long time, or both.

colleague: A fellow worker in a profession or office.

combustible: Capable of catching fire and burning.

compact: To pack closely and firmly together.

compacted: Closely and firmly packed together.

complex: Complicated and having many different relationships.

complexity: The state of being complicated or having many related parts.

component: Any of the main parts of a whole.

composition: The act of combining parts or elements to form a whole.

compound: A chemical substance formed from two or more elements.

confirm: To make definite or official by agreeing or approving.

conifer: A type of evergreen tree(pine, fir, spruce) that has cones.

coniferous: Having cones.

consensus: Agreement of all or most.

conservation: The care and protection of natural resources such as forests and water.

conserve: To avoid wasteful or destructive use of something.

conserved: To avoid wasteful or destructive use of something.

constrain: To hold in or keep back by force.

Cottonwood: A type of poplar tree that has seeds with cottony hairs.

correspondent: In the context of FRA 2005, a correspondent is a representative from each country who gathered and sent information to FAO.

crevice: A narrow opening caused by a crack or a split.

criteria: Standards on which a judgment or decision may be based.

crown: The top part of something.

crystallize: To form crystals. Water crystals are formed when water vapor cools and water molecules are pulled together.

Congress: The group of elected officials in the United States that makes the laws. Congress is made up of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

control: Something used for comparison when checking the results of an experiment.

culvert: A pipe placed under a road.

cutslope: Uphill soil bank along a hillside road.

cyclical: Like a cycle; when events continue to happen in the same order.

data: Facts or figures studied in order to make a conclusion.

day-roost: When birds with wings rest or sleep during the day.

deciduous: Shedding its leaves every year; not evergreen.

decompose: To rot or decay.

decomposer: Organisms that digest parts of dead organisms and the wastes from living organisms.

defecate: To get rid of waste matter from the bowels.

dense: Having its parts close together.

density: The condition of a substance having its parts close together.

dependent: Relying on.

designate: To choose or appoint; to give a name to .

diameter: The distance equal to a straight line passing through the center of a circle, cylinder, or sphere.

disastrous: Causing suffering or disaster.

disperse: To scatter or spread in all directions.

distort: To twist out of a normal shape.

diverse: Differing from one another.

diversity: The quality of being different or varied.

dominant: Being able to control all others, or being in the majority.

downstream: In the direction in which a stream is flowing.

downwind: In the direction toward which the wind is blowing.

duct: A tube or a channel through which a gas or liquid moves.

ecological: Having to do with ecology, the study of organisms and their relationship with their environment.

ecologist: A person who studies the relationship between living things and their environment.

ecology: The study of the interactions of living things with one another and with their environment.

economic: Having to do with the management of money in a home, business, or government.

economics: The study of the way that goods and wealth are produced, distributed, and used.

ecosystem: Community of plant and animal species interacting with one another and with the non-living environment.

efficient: Bringing about the result wanted with the least amount of time, waste, or materials.

element: Any of the parts or qualities of a thing, especially a necessary one.

elevation: The height above sea level.

emissions: Something discharged or sent out.

emit: To throw out or eject.

emitted: Discharged or sent out.

endangered: Legal term referring to a species whose existence is in danger.

endangered species: Wild plants or animals with so few individual survivors that the species could become extinct in the area where it naturally lives.

Endangered Species Act: Under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 "the term "endangered species" means any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range other than a species of the Class Insecta determined by the Secretary to constitute a pest whose protection under the provisions of this Act would present an overwhelming and overriding risk to man. A "threatened species" means any species, which is likely to become an endangered species in the future.

entomologist: A scientist who studies insects.

entomology: The study of insects.

environmental services: The collection of environmental processes that provide benefit to life on Earth.

equation: A written statement that indicates the equality of two expressions.

erode: To wear away.

erosion: The process or state of wearing or washing away.

estimate: To make a general but careful guess about the size, quality, value, or cost of.

estimates: Calculated values that come close to the actual value.

ethnic: Of or describing a group of people who have the same language, culture, etc.

evidence: Something that shows or proves.

evolve: To develop by gradual changes.

evolved: Developed by gradual changes.

exotic: Strange, different, or foreign.

external: On the outside.

extinct: No longer living.

extinction: No longer existing.

Federal: A union of States having a central government.

feedback: A response, often one that sets a process in motion. The response can then also be affected by the process it set in motion.

fire manager: A person whose job is to prevent or control forest fires.

firebrands: Burning embers that fly out of intense fires.

fish ladder: A series of small dams built in streams or rivers. These function like steps to enable animals to swim upstream.

fish biologist: A person who studies fish and the processes that support fish

flood plain: Flat land area next to a stream or river.

fluctuation: The act of continually changing or wavering.

fodder: Coarse food for cattle, horses, or sheep, etc., like straw or hay.

foliage: The leaves of a tree or plant.

forage: Food for animals usually taken by browsing or grazing; Act of taking such food.

foraging: The act of taking food by animals, usually taken by browsing or grazing.

forest manager: Skilled individual who takes care of natural resources.

former: Earlier or in the past.

fossil fuel emissions: The by-products of burning fossil fuels.

fossil fuel: Fuel, such as coal, petroleum, or natural gas, formed from the fossilized remains of plants and animals.

fragile: Easily destroyed.

fragmentation: The act or process of breaking apart or detaching.

freshwater: Having to do with or living in water that is not salty.

fungus: An organism without chlorophyll that reproduces by spores. Mushrooms, molds, mildews, and toadstools are types of fungus. (Plural is fungi).

gaseous: In the form of gas.

gaseous emissions: Things discharged in the form of gas.

genetic diversity: Variation at the level of individual genes that makes variety possible.

geographic: Having to do with the Earth's division into areas such as continents, seas, countries, States, etc.

germinate: To start growing or developing.

germination: The act of sprouting or beginning to grow.

global warming: An increase in the average temperature of the Earth's atmosphere.

glucose: A form of sugar found in nature.

grassland: Open land with grass growing on it.

greenhouse effect: Warming of the earth's surface that occurs when the sun's heat is trapped by the atmosphere.

groundwater: Water that sinks into the soil and is stored in aquifers.

habitat: Environment where a plant or animal naturally grows and lives.

habitation: Living in a place.

hectare: A metric measure of land area equal to .405 acre.

hibernate: To pass the winter in a sleeping or resting state.

hypothesis: An unproven idea that is accepted for the time being and is often tested during a scientific study.

ignition: The act of setting on fire or catching on fire.

immune system: The system within the body that protects the body from disease; includes white blood cells and antibodies.

import: To bring goods into one country from another.

incubate: To keep something warm and protected so it will hatch.

indicate: To point out or point to.

indicator species: Type of plant or animal that serves as a measure of the environmental health of an area.

indicator: Something that measures or shows something.

infertile: Not able to produce crops, fruit, or offspring.

insloping: Hillside road surface that slopes down and in the direction of the uphill slope.

intense: Very strong or great.

intensity: The quality of being very strong.

intercept: To stop or interrupt the progress or intended course of something.

intercepted: Stopped or interrupted.

interviewer: A person who asks another person about his or her opinions, activities, etc.

invasive: Tending to spread or infringe upon.

inventory: A complete list of goods, supplies, possessions, etc.

inverse: Exactly opposite.

irrigation: The act of watering by means of canals, ditches, pipes, or sprinklers.

land cover: Whatever is covering the land, such as trees, grasses, buildings, or roads.

land management: Decisions and actions involving natural lands to achieve specific purposes.

land manager: A skilled individual who takes care of the land.

landscape: All of the land forms of a region.

landscape plan: A drawn plan to make a piece of ground more attractive by adding trees, plants, shrubs, and flowers.

land use history: The story of how land has been used by people over time.

larva: Wormlike feeding form that hatches from the egg of many insects.

larval: Relating to the wormlike feeding form that hatches from the egg of many insects or animals that changes form when it becomes an adult.

latitude: Distance north or south of the equator.

legal: Relating to law.

legally: Based on law.

life cycle: Stages in the development of an organism.

live-trap: A device used to trap an animal without harming it.

livestock: Animals kept or raised on farms.

majority: More than half.

mammal: Any warm blooded animal with a backbone and glands to produce milk for feeding their young.

manage: To have charge of or direct the work of.

management: Decisions and actions taken to achieve specific purposes.

manager: A skilled person who directs or manages something.

manure: Animal waste products.

mature: Fully developed or fully grown.

maturity: The state of being fully grown or developed.

median: The number that is halfway between in a list of numbers.

medicinal: Being or acting like a medicine.

metabolize: Chemical changes in a living body that provide energy to the cells for survival, growth, and reproduction.

metamorphosis: The process of change in the form of some animals from an immature stage to an adult stage.

microclimate: The climate of a small, specific place within a larger area.

migrate: To move from one place to another.

migration: The act of moving from one place to another.

migratory: Having a characteristic of moving from one place to another.

mine: To take coal, ores, or other minerals from the earth by digging a large hole.

mine spoil: The waste material left over from mining.

mobile: Able to move from location to location.

modernize: To make or become modern; to bring up to date.

modify: To make a small change in.

molecular: Having to do with molecules, which are the smallest particles of a substance that can exist alone without losing their chemical form.

molecule: The smallest particle of a substance. Consists of one or more atoms.

monetary: Having to do with money.

national forests: Federal land managed by the USDA Forest Service to provide outdoor recreation opportunities, clean water, timber, habitat for wildlife, minerals, and for other uses.

national grassland: Federal area managed by the USDA Forest Service as a prairie.

national park: Federal land managed by the Department of the Interior National Park Service as a preserved natural area to be used for outdoor recreation and for learning about United States culture and history.

national wildlife refuge: Federal land managed by the Department of the Interior U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to provide habitat for wildlife.

native: Naturally occurring in an area.

natural disaster: A natural happening that causes much damage or suffering.

natural resource: A supply of something in nature that takes care of a human need, such as oil.

natural resource manager: Skilled person who takes care of natural resources.

nocturnal: Relating to or occurring at night.

non-native: Not naturally occurring in an area.

nonflammable: Not easily set on fire.

Northern Hemisphere: The half of Earth that is north of the equator.

nursery: A place where young trees or plants are raised for study or for sale.

nutrient: Any of the substances found in food that are needed for the life and growth of plants and animals.

old growth forest: Forest that contains trees that are hundreds or sometimes thousands of years old.

optical: Relating to vision or to light.

organic: Related to or coming from living organisms.

organism: Any living thing.

outdoor recreation: Activities done outside for fun, such as hiking, boating, or playing baseball.

perch: A tree branch that a bird sits on.

pheromone: A chemical given off by certain animals to attract mates, mark trails, etc.

phloem: Tissue that transports nutrients from the leaves to the rest of the plant.

photosynthesis: The process by which green plants use sunlight to form sugars and starches from water and carbon dioxide.

plume: Something that is shaped like a large, fluffy feather.

pollinate: To place pollen on the pistil of a flower, which fertilizes the flower and causes seeds to develop.

pool: A quiet, deep place in a stream.

population: The whole number of individuals of the same type occupying an area.

porous: Full of pores or tiny holes through which water, air, etc., may pass.

prairie: Large areas of grasslands with fertile soils and few trees.

predict: To tell what one thinks will happen in the future.

predictable: Easy to tell what one thinks will happen in the future.

preservation: To protect from harm or damage; to save.

prey: An animal hunted for food by another animal.

prone: Likely.

proportion: The relation of one thing to another in size, amount, degree, etc.

psychology: The science that studies the ways that people think and the reasons for their actions.

public land: Land that is owned by the people as a whole; Land that is taken care of for the good of all of the people.

publicly: By the government, on behalf of all citizens.

pupa: Intermediate stage of insect growth between larva and adult.

quality: Any of the features that make a thing what it is.

quantify: To count or measure; To give the quantity of.

quantity: An amount or portion.

questionnaire: A list of questions used to gather information from people.

radiation: The process of sending energy out in rays from atoms and molecules.

radiotelemetry: The process of recording the location of something using radio waves.

radius: A straight line that extends from the center to the outside of a circle or sphere.

random: Selecting a smaller number from a group in such a way that all members of the group have the same chance of being selected.

randomly: A way of selecting a smaller number from a group in such a way that all members of the group have the same chance of being selected.

rangelands: Open land which is mostly covered with grasses or shrubs.

ratio: The relation of one thing to another in size, amount, etc. Proportion.

refuge: A safe or protected place.

regulation: The act of controlling according to a system.

relationship: When two or more things are connected in some fashion.

relative humidity: The percentage of water vapor in the air relative to the total amount of water vapor the air can hold at that temperature.

remoteness: The quality of being far away.

represent: To be an example of.

representation: A likeness, picture, image, etc.

representative: A person chosen to act for or speak for others.

reptile: Cold blooded animal that has a backbone and scales, and crawls on its belly or creeps on very short legs.

reservoir: A place where something, especially water, is collected and stored for use.

respiration: The process by which a living thing takes in oxygen from the air and gives off carbon dioxide and other waste products.

respire: To carry on respiration.

resin: Cloudy, sticky substance that oozes from some trees.

resource: Something that takes care of a need.

restoration: The act of bringing back to an earlier condition.

riffle: A shallow place in a stream with fast water and small waves.

rodent: An animal having sharp front teeth for gnawing.

salmonids: Long, bony fishes such as salmon or trout.

sample: A part or piece that shows what the whole group or thing is like.

satellite imagery: Photographs and other images of Earth taken from satellites orbiting Earth.

saturate: To soak completely through.

saturated: Soaked completely through.

saturation: The state of being saturated, completely filled or soaked.

scale: A series of steps or degrees based on size, amount, rank, etc.

scat: Animal fecal dropping; Animal poop.

scrub: An area with short, stubby trees or bushes.

sea level: The level of the surface of the sea.

sediment: Matter set down by wind or water, such as sand or soil.

sedimentation: The process of depositing soil and other particles carried by wind or water.

shrub: A woody plant that is smaller than a tree, usually with many stems. A bush.

silt: Very small particles left as sediment in water.

simulate: To create the appearance or effect of something for purposes of evaluation.

simulated: Created the appearance or effect of something for purposes of evaluation.

skeptical: Having or showing doubt.

social service: A process or service, usually sponsored by a government, that benefits humans.

social scientist: A scientist who studies individual humans, groups, and their actions or relationships.

socioeconomic: Of, relating to, or involving a combination of social and economic factors.

sociology: The study of people living together in groups.

soil erosion: Movement of soil from one place to another, usually by wind or water.

specialization: Special study of something or working only in a special topic or area.

species: Groups of organisms that resemble one another in appearance, behavior, chemical processes, and genetic structure.

species diversity: Number of different types of plants or animals in an area.

speculate: To think about or make guesses.

spore: A tiny cell of a plant or animal that can grow into a new plant or animal.

stable: Not likely to change; firm; steady.

stand: A group of trees growing in a continuous area.

status: The state or condition of something.

stereotype: To think about a person or group that follows a fixed pattern, paying no attention to individual differences.

steward: A person who takes care of large areas of land.

strategy: A plan or overall approach.

stressed: Strained, pressured, or placed under tension.

subsistence: The act of living or stay alive, getting the items necessary to live, such as food, clothing, and shelter.

summarize: To make a summary, or a brief report.

Superfund: A U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) program to help clean up the environment. The areas that the EPA has identified as the most polluted sites in the United States are called Superfund sites.

surface water: Water that does not seep into the ground or evaporate into the atmosphere.

survey: A method used to ask questions to collect information.

sustain: To keep up or maintain.

sustainable: The quality of surviving or being maintained over a specific time period.

synthetic: Made by putting together chemicals rather than using natural products.

theory: An explanation of how or why something happens.

threatened: Legal term meaning the existence of the species is likely to become endangered in the future.

threatened and endangered species: Species whose numbers are so low as to threaten or endanger its existence in the future.

topography: The surface features of a region, such as rivers, hills, and valleys.

transition: The act or process of passing from one condition, form, or place to another.

tree crown: The upper green section of a tree with leaves or needles.

trend: The direction or course that something takes.

tropical: Of, in, or like the tropics. The tropics is the region of the earth near the equator.

troposphere: The part of the atmosphere from earth's surface up to about 6 miles.

tundra: Treeless flat plains found in cold arctic climates, and covered with grasses, mosses, and small shrubs .

ultraviolet radiation: Invisible rays of light lying beyond the violet end of the spectrum.

understory: Vegetation in a forest that is near the ground.

unit of measurement: A standard quantity of a physical property, such as meters, degrees Celsius, or grams.

unique: Being the only one; unusual.

upwind: The direction from which the wind is blowing.

urban: Living in or having to do with cities or towns.

vacant: Not occupied.

variable: Thing that can vary in number or amount.

variation: Change from a former condition or from a standard.

vegetation: Plant life.

water vapor pressure: The amount of pressure put forth by the water which is in air at different temperatures.

watershed: Land area with small streams that delivers water to a larger stream.

weather station: A place where instruments measure and record weather conditions.

weather: The temperature, wind, cloudiness, rainfall or snowfall, and humidity of a place for a short period of time, such as a few days.

wetland: Area of land with lots of soil moisture.

wilderness: Area designated by Congress to be preserved in a wild and natural condition as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Wilderness manager: A skilled individual who manages a Wilderness area.

wildfire: An uncontrolled wildland fire started naturally or by careless human action.

wildlife: Animals that live in the wild.

wildlife manager: Skilled individual who manages natural resources for wildlife.