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| Glossary |  |
| Chapter 8 |  |
| aquatic life zone | Marine and freshwater portions of the biosphere. Examples include freshwater life zones (such as lakes and streams) and ocean or marine life zones (such as estuaries, coastlines, coral reefs, and the open ocean). |
| benthos | Bottom-dwelling organisms. Compare decomposer, nekton, plankton. |
| coastal wetland | Land along a coastline, extending inland from an estuary that is covered with saltwater all or part of the year. Examples include marshes, bays, lagoons, tidal flats, and mangrove swamps. Compare inland wetland. |
| coastal zone | Warm, nutrient-rich, shallow part of the ocean that extends from the high-tide mark on land to the edge of a shelflike extension of continental land masses known as the continental shelf. Compare open sea. |
| coral reef | Formation produced by massive colonies containing billions of tiny coral animals, called polyps, that secrete a stony substance (calcium carbonate) around themselves for protection. When the corals die, their empty outer skeletons form layers and cause the reef to grow. Coral reefs are found in the coastal zones of warm tropical and subtropical oceans. |
| decomposer | Organism that digests parts of dead organisms, and cast-off fragments and wastes of living organisms by breaking down the complex organic molecules in those materials into simpler inorganic compounds and then absorbing the soluble nutrients. Producers return most of these chemicals to the soil and water for reuse. Decomposers consist of various bacteria and fungi. Compare consumer, detritivore, producer. |
| estuary | Partially enclosed coastal area at the mouth of a river where its freshwater, carrying fertile silt and runoff from the land, mixes with salty seawater. |
| euphotic zone | Upper layer of a body of water through which sunlight can penetrate and support photosynthesis. |
| eutrophic lake | Lake with a large or excessive supply of plant nutrients, mostly nitrates and phosphates. Compare mesotrophic lake, oligotrophic lake. |
| freshwater life zones | Aquatic systems where water with a dissolved salt concentration of less than 1% by volume accumulates on or flows through the surfaces of terrestrial biomes. Examples include standing (lentic) bodies of freshwater such as lakes, ponds, and inland wetlands and flowing (lotic) systems such as streams and rivers. Compare biome. |
| inland wetland | Land away from the coast, such as a swamp, marsh, or bog, that is covered all or part of the time with freshwater. Compare coastal wetland. |
| intertidal zone | The area of shoreline between low and high tides. |
| lake | Large natural body of standing freshwater formed when water from precipitation, land runoff, or groundwater flow fills a depression in the earth created by glaciation, earth movement, volcanic activity, or a giant meteorite. See eutrophic lake, mesotrophic lake, oligotrophic lake. |
| mangrove swamps | Swamps found on the coastlines in warm tropical climates. They are dominated by mangrove trees, any of about 55 species of trees and shrubs that can live partly submerged in the salty environment of coastal swamps. |
| marine life zone | Aquatic life zones associated with oceans: oceans and their accompanying bays, estuaries, coastal wetlands, shorelines, coral reefs, and mangrove forests. See saltwater life zone. |
| mesotrophic lake | Lake with a moderate supply of plant nutrients. Compare eutrophic lake, oligotrophic lake. |
| nekton | Strongly swimming organisms found in aquatic systems. Compare benthos, plankton. |
| oligotrophic lake | Lake with a low supply of plant nutrients. Compare eutrophic lake, mesotrophic lake. |
| open sea | Part of an ocean that lies beyond the continental shelf. Compare coastal zone. |
| plankton | Small plant organisms (phytoplankton) and animal organisms (zooplankton) that float in aquatic ecosystems. |
| runoff | Freshwater from precipitation and melting ice that flows on the earth's surface into nearby streams, lakes, wetlands, and reservoirs. See reliable runoff, surface runoff, surface water. Compare groundwater. |
| saltwater life zones | Aquatic life zones associated with oceans: oceans and their accompanying bays, estuaries, coastal wetlands, shorelines, coral reefs, and mangrove forests. |
| subsidence | Slow or rapid sinking of part of the earth's crust that is not slope-related. |
| surface water | Precipitation that does not infiltrate the ground or return to the atmosphere by evaporation or transpiration. See runoff. Compare groundwater. |
| watershed | Land area that delivers water, sediment, and dissolved substances via small streams to a major stream (river). |