

Wildlife Glossary

Abiotic – a non-living factor in an environment i e. light, water, temperature

Adaptation – the long term process of evolutionary change by a species

Aestivation – dormancy, generally seasonally

Alien species – species that are not native (natural) to an area are also known as non-native species, introduced species, non-indigenous species, exotic species and invasive species.

Altricial — young birds that are born naked and with eyes closed, unable to leave the nest

Aquatic – growing, living in or frequenting water

Arboreal – tree dweller

Autotroph – an organism capable of manufacturing its own food by synthesis of inorganic materials, as in photosynthesis

Bergman's rule – among forms of a particular species, body size tends to be larger in the cooler regions of its range and smaller in the warmer regions

Bioaccumulation – the additive accumulation of substances in the tissues of organisms in food chains

Biomass – the total mass of all biological organisms

Biotic factors - living organisms that impact the growth, composition, and structure of the forest (e.g., insects, herbivores, humans)

Brood – the offspring of a bird just hatched

Browse – (v) to eat the twigs and leaves of woody plants; (n) commonly used in wildlife management to signify brushy plants utilized by deer

Buteo – any of the various hawks of the genus *Buteo*, characterized by broad wings and broad, rounded tails

Critical Habitat - geographic area containing physical or biological features essential to the conservation of a listed species or an area that may require special management considerations or protection

Carapace – the upper or dorsal surface of a turtle’s shell

Carnivore – an animal belonging to the order Carnivora, including predominantly meat eating mammals

Carrion – the bodies of dead animals usually found in nature in a decaying state

Carrying capacity – the number of wildlife species that a given unit of habitat will support without damage to the habitat

Cast – to regurgitate indigestible prey remains

Circadian – designating a biological period of about 24 hours

Climax stage – the final stage of plant succession

Clutch — total number of eggs laid by a female bird in one nest attempt

Commensal – a term to describe a species that lives in close association and gets some benefit from another species but does not return any benefit (e.g. gopher frogs live in gopher tortoise burrows but provide no benefit for the gopher tortoise)

Consumptive use – any use that involves activity resulting in the loss of wildlife i.e. hunting

Contour feather — predominate feather type found on the body, wings, and tail of the bird

Contiguous forests – forests that share an edge or boundary

Coverts – one or more of a group of feathers covering the bases of the longer main feathers of a bird’s wings or tail

Covey – a small group or flock, often a family group, of birds such as quail

Crepuscular – appearing or becoming active at twilight or dawn

Clutch – eggs laid and incubated by a female bird per nesting

Corridor – areas of continuous habitat that permit animals to travel securely from one habitat to another

Crepuscular — active at twilight, dawn, and dusk

Dabbling ducks – duck species that principally feed in shallow water by “tipping up” or dabbling on the surface

Depredation – the act of preying upon in reference to wildlife damage to farmer's crops

Disease vector - Vectors are vehicles by which infections are transmitted from one host to another. Most commonly known vectors consist of [arthropods](#), domestic animals or mammals that assist in transmitting [parasitic](#) organisms to humans or other mammals.

Diurnal – a term used to describe an animal that is most active by day

Dorsal – of or pertaining to the upper surface

Dump nest – eggs deposited by more than one female in a single nest

Ecosystem – a community of organisms and their physical environment interacting as a unit

Edge – the place where two or more different plant communities come together or meet

Endangered – species in danger of extinction or extirpation if the harmful factors affecting their populations continue to operate (compare with lesser risk categories of threatened or species of special concern)

Endemic – confined to a certain area or region

Estivation – a state of inactivity during prolonged periods of drought or high temperatures

Extirpate – elimination of a species from a given area; local extinction

Feral – domesticated animals that have gone wild (e.g. hogs, dogs, cats)

Fledge — the act of leaving the nest or nest cavity after reaching a certain stage of maturity

Flyway – fly routes established by migratory birds

Food chain – a sequence of feeding types, on successive levels within a community through which energy and biomass is transferred (e.g. plants are eaten by rodents that are eaten by snakes that are eaten by hawks)

Food Web – a [network](#) of [food chains](#) by which [energy](#) and [nutrients](#) are passed [on](#) from one [species](#) of living organisms to another

Forage – vegetation taken naturally by herbivorous animals (n); the act of searching for and eating vegetative materials (v)

Forest Game – game species that are managed by the DNR whose habitat needs are found mainly in forests

Fossorial - a burrowing mammal having limbs adapted for digging

Furbearers – various animals that have a thick coat of soft hair covering their bodies

Gene pool – the total genetic information that a population has or the sum of all genes

Guard hairs – long, coarse hairs that forms a protective coating over an animal's under fur

Habitat — the place or environment where an animal (or plant) naturally or normally lives and raises young

Habitat Conservation Plan - A plan which outlines the impact of a listed species living within a project area, the steps taken to mitigate the project's impacts and the funding that will be available to implement these measures, alternatives to the project and why they were not adopted, and any other measures that the Fish and Wildlife Service has determined to be necessary for the plan.

Harvest – proportion or number of a wildlife population brought to bag by hunters

Hatch — to emerge from an egg, pupa, or chrysalis

Herbivore – an animal that eats plants

Herpetology – the scientific study of reptiles and amphibians as a branch of Zoology

Heterotrophic - requires organic compounds of carbon and nitrogen for nourishment; "most animals are heterotrophic"

Hibernation – the act of passing all or part of winter in a dormant state where body functions is greatly slowed

Incubation — the act of rearing and hatching eggs by the warmth of the body

Indigenous – a naturally occurring species

Insectivore – a mammal or organism that feeds on insects

Invertebrate — lacking a spinal column

Keystone species – a species that other species depend upon for survival

Larvae — the immature, wingless, and often wormlike stage of a metamorphic insect that hatches from the egg, alters chiefly in size while passing through several molts, and is finally transformed into a pupa or chrysalis from which the adult emerges

Lateral – pertaining to the side

Limiting factor – Anything affecting the population of a species which could result from causes in nature as well as human activities. Examples include food, water, shelter, space, disease, predation, climatic conditions, pollution, hunting, poaching and accidents

Litter – the number of young born with each birthing

Mandibles – either the upper or lower part of the beak in birds

Marsupial – a mammal of the order Marsupialia that includes kangaroos, opossums, bandicoots and wombats. These females have pouches that contain mammary glands and that shelter the young until fully developed

Melanistic – abnormally dark pigmentation of the skin or other tissues

Migration – the movement of animals to and from feeding or reproductive and nesting areas

Molt – to shed hair, feathers, shell, horns or an outer layer periodically

Monogamous – term used when one male breeds with one female

Mortality (death-rate) – the number of animals that die each year

Natality (birth-rate) – ability of a population to increase; reproductive rate

Nestling — a young bird that has not left, or abandoned, the nest

Niche – that part of a habitat particularly suited to the requirements of a given species

Nocturnal – active by night; the opposite of diurnal

Omnivore – an animal or organism that feeds on both animal and plant matter

Ornithology – The scientific study of birds as a branch of zoology

Pair bond — the association between two birds who have come together for reproduction; can be short-term (lasting only through egg-laying or the rearing of young) or lifelong

Parasite – an organism that lives by deriving benefit (usually doing harm) from another organism

Passerine – birds of the order Passeriformes, which include perching birds and songbirds such as the jays, blackbirds, finches, warblers and sparrows

Pelage – the hair, fur, wool or other soft covering of a mammal

Philopatry – annual homing to the same nesting area and often the same nest site

Plastron – the ventral surface of the shell of a turtle or tortoise

Polygamy or polygyny – term used when a male animal breeds with many females

Population – the number of a particular species in a defined area

Population dynamics – factors regulating population levels including natality, productivity and mortality

Precocial — young that are capable of a high degree of independent activity from birth

Range – the geographic area or areas normally inhabited by a species

Rare – species that are uncommon, and usually potentially at risk because of their restricted geographic area or habitat.

Riparian area – the area of influence between upland habitats and aquatic habitats

Ruminant – an even-toed hoofed mammal with a stomach of four chambers that swallows its food un-chewed, then regurgitates it, chews it thoroughly, and re-swallows it. Common ruminants are the camel, giraffe, deer, pronghorn, and cattle

Scat – the excrement droppings of an animal

Species – populations of animals that possess common characteristics and freely inter-breed in nature and produce fertile offspring

Species richness – the number of wildlife species found in a given area

Species of Special Concern – Species that are considered vulnerable to large-scale population declines. This category is not as severe as endangered or threatened.

Taxonomy – the arrangement of plants and animals into groups based on their natural relationships. Standard classifications are into 7 groups listed below, but are subdivided for different taxa

Kingdom – the two dominant kingdoms are plant and animal.

Phylum – vertebrates and invertebrates are the most recognized phyla.

Class – vertebrate classes include birds, mammals, fish, amphibians, and reptiles, there are multitudes of invertebrate classes, and fish often are broken into many classes.

Family – examples of families in the order carnivore include Canidae (dogs,wolves) Felidae (cats), Mustelidae (weasels, skunks, badger), and others.

Genus – the genus of dogs is *Canis* (genus names are always capitalized and either underlined or italicized).

Species – closely related individuals which actually or potentially interbreed, the domestic dog species is *familiaris*, the coyote is *latrans*, and the wolf is *rufus*, all in the genus *Canis*. Species names are underlined or italicized, but NOT capitalized.

Terrestrial — living or growing on land

Territory – The concept of dominance over a unit of habitat; an area defended by an animal against others of the same species, or sometimes other species; can be defended for breeding, feeding, courtship, or other reasons.

Threatened – A designation given to species that are likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future if current trends continue. This is the intermediate category between endangered and species of special concern.

Toxin – any of various poisonous substances produced by certain plant or animal cells

Upland game – game species that are managed by the DNR whose habitat needs are usually found in upland areas

Trophic level – a feeding level in the food chain of an ecosystem characterized by organisms that occupy a similar functional position in the ecosystem

Ventral – of or pertaining to the lower surface

Waterfowl – water birds, usually referring to ducks, geese and swans