

How to overcome communication barriers in nature experience

Annex 5. Simple language definitions of technical terms

In this small dictionary we gathered some examples of technical terms concerning different topics about the environment. They have been grouped by selected categories to help understand the relations between the terms. We believe this way is also easier for the users.

ORGANISMS
organism – one specific living thing. Animals, plants, fungi and bacteria are organisms. Organisms can be tiny like a bacterium or very large like a whale, elephant, or tree.
species - specific group of organisms. The members of the group look and live similar lives and are able to have babies together.
amphibian - a small animal that lives both in water and on land. Examples of amphibians are frogs, toads and newts.
reptile – an animal which has a skin covered with small, hard plates (called scales) and that lays eggs. Reptiles like sitting in the sun and usually have a long tail. Snakes, lizards, turtles, crocodiles are reptiles.
mammal - an animal that feeds their baby with milk. Most mammals have fur. Examples of mammals are dog, cat, mouse, beaver, deer or bat.
bird - an animal that has feathers and lays eggs. Their eggs have a hard shell. Most birds can fly. Swans, sparrows, eagles are birds.
insect - a small animal that has six legs and no bones. Most insects have wings. Examples of insects are bees, beetles, butterflies or ants. Young insects are called larvae and usually differ from the adults. For instance, the larva of a butterfly is called caterpillar.
plant - an organism that does not need to eat food like animals. Plants produce their own food with the help of sunlight. There are different forms of plants: trees, bushes, grass, herbs, moss and many others. Plants may have roots, stems and leaves. Many plants have flowers and produce fruits and seeds.
fungus - an organism that differs from plants and animals. Fungi do not take energy from the Sun. They feed on dead plants or animals. Some fungi are poisonous, some are edible. Fungi can have different forms and colours. Examples of fungi are yeast, mushrooms, mould.

alga – an organism that produces its own food using sunlight. Algae have a simple body structure without leaves, stems and roots. They are mostly green or brown. They often live in water, can be very tiny or very large.

lichen - two organisms - fungus and alga or bacteria living together. Each of the organisms benefit from this common living. They create a common form of different shapes.

NATURE

nature - everything that has not been made by humans. This includes all living organisms (e.g. wild animals and plants) and phenomena (e.g. rain or storms).

biological diversity - is the great variety of life on earth. Biodiversity includes the variety of individuals, species and ecosystems.

wildlife - wild animals that live in their natural habitat.

captive animals - wild animals that are kept by humans, for example an elephant in a zoo or a parrot at home.

ENVIRONMENTS

habitat - a place where an organism lives, e.g. a fish lives in a river and a moose in a forest.

ecosystem - all living organisms and the space they live in, linked together.

landscape - an area consisting of all ecosystems occurring in the same place, the landscape consists of landforms (like mountains), animals, plants, and even buildings.

soil - upper substrate of the ground in which plants have their roots and in which many small animals live e.g. worms. Different plants and animals live on different soils. Soils are brown, black, pale, grey or red.

minerals - hard elements in the ground of which rocks (stones) are made, minerals have different colours, some glisten and sparkle. They are used by plants and other producers to build their food.

river - flowing water body, starting in its source and going down to the sea or other water body. Water is very important for life.

erosion - moving of rocks and soil by water or wind. It makes new space for species and habitats.

meander - the bend of the river, created, deepened and increased all the time by the erosion from water flow. Meanders have more habitats for animals and plants than a straight river course.

forest - biotope with many trees growing densely in certain space. Forests may be deciduous or coniferous or mixed. Many plants and animals live in the forest finding shade and safety under the trees.

stand of trees - trees growing in the forest, their type, age and size. Different stands are used by different species.

understory - small trees, bushes and ferns growing beneath taller trees in a forest.

groundcover – the lowest layer in the forest; plants that live near the ground: moss, berries, ferns, mushrooms;

FEEDING

feeding - looking for food, finding it and eating. Some organisms (plants, algae) produce their own food.

predator - an animal that hunts, kills and eats other animals. Predators may be large (e.g. wolves) or small (spiders).

prey - food of the predator. The animal that the predator wants to catch and eat.

scavenger – an animal that eats dead animals.

herbivore - an animal that eats living plants.

saprophage - organism eating dead plants.

parasite - an organism that lives off another organism – host. Parasites steal food or water or sunlight from the host. Parasites may be bacteria, worms, fleas, fungi or plants.

photosynthesis - the way that plants eat. They need the sun, the air and water to become strong and grow.

solar energy - light and heat provided by the Sun. It is used by plants, algae and some bacteria to produce food. It is used by humans for heating or producing electric energy.

NATURE PROTECTION

nature protection – everything that is done to protect species, and their habitats. For example rules that forbid throwing trash into nature.

nature park (landscape park) - protected area with valuable habitats and landscapes.

protected species - a rare species, legally protected. You can be punished for destroying or killing it. Special areas are created for protected species, e.g. nature reserves, national parks, nature parks and other.

protected plant species - a rare species of plant that should not be picked nor stepped on.

protected animal species - a species of animal that cannot be scared, caught, or killed.

native species - organisms that have lived in the area for a very long time and are a natural element of the environment.

invasive species – new species that got to some place with human help and harm native species. They are often stronger than native species and take their living place or hunt them.

bioindicator - a species that can only live under very specific conditions. Its presence shows that this specific kind of environment is in a good condition.

pollution - situation when a harmful or poisonous substance enters the environment and destroys it. Pollution can happen in the water, soil or air.

climate change - changes in atmospheric conditions observed for many years all over the Earth. The main change is so called global warming, the air temperature on Earth is getting higher and higher. This is dangerous for people and nature.

sustainable development - living without destroying the environment, use of resources (like water, fuel) by people in such a way that they don't run out.

NATURE EXPERIENCE

observation - seeing an animal on a field trip. Observation of a rare animal or plant may be important for science or nature protection.

binoculars - a device that we put in front of our eyes. While watching through it, we can see up close things that are far away.

field guidebook - a book with pictures of animals, plants or mushrooms. It helps you to recognize the species.

sense organ - the element of the body through which we perceive external information: ears, eyes, nose, skin, tongue. We can experience nature with all 5 different senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste.

tourist trail - walking path in a beautiful place like a forest or mountains. You can see, hear or touch a lot of nice and interesting things, animals and plants. The trails may have information boards to help understand the area.