
ADAPT: To fit in; to be suited for getting the things one needs to survive.

ADAPTATION: Special characteristics that make an organism more suited to its environment.

ALGAE: A group of plants found in water or damp places; have chlorophyll, but lack tree stems, roots, leaves.

ALLIGATOR: Alligators help other Everglades animals by keeping water holes open. A female builds a large nest of debris close to the water and guards her eggs and young. Alligators predators and are at the top of the food chain; however, young alligators are prey to herons, hawks, and sometimes other alligators. Alligators can stay under water for up to an hour.

AMPHIBIANS: “Cold-blooded”, smooth-skinned vertebrate organisms.

ANHINGA: Also called “snake bird.” It swims under water to spear small fish. When back on land they hang their wings out to dry so they can fly again. They must do this because their wings contain less oil than most other water birds.

ANOLE: A small lizard sometimes called the chameleon. Like true chameleons, they can change their color (from green to brown or grey).

APPLE SNAIL: A brown, fresh-water snail that is the primary food of the snail kite. It lays its pearl-white eggs on the leaves of water plants, just above the high water line.

AQUIFER: A water-bearing bed of gravel, rock, or sand capable of yielding considerable amounts of water to wells or springs.

ARACHNID: Spiders, scorpions, daddy-long-legs, and mites are also arachnids. Spiders have eight legs and insects have six. A spider has two main parts to its body an insect has three. Many insects have wings and almost all have feelers or antennae. Spiders have neither wings nor antennae.

BARK: The outer covering of plants such as on branches, roots, and trunks of trees.

BARRED OWL: A large brown, headed wood owl. It is one of only two kinds of owls with large brown eyes; marked by bars across the chest and head and length-wise along the tail. It has special hairs along the front edges that allows it to fly soundlessly. The owl feeds on small rodents. Owls have excellent sight and hearing. Their eyes can only see straight ahead, so they have to move their whole head.

BASS: A fresh water fish and is a predator that feeds on other freshwater fish and, in turn, is prey to alligators.

BIVALVE: A type of mollusk. A mollusk with a shell of two parts opening like a hinge.

BLACK BEAR: They are omnivorous in their diets, meaning they eat both meat and plants. They are more commonly seen in Big Cypress National Preserve.

BLADDERWORT: A carnivorous water plant with small yellow flowers. It has small bladders below the water's surface to trap small animals.

BOBCAT: This cat is a nocturnal meat eater, needing over twenty square miles to find enough food.

BROMELIAD: It uses trees for support, but does not harm them. Also called an air plant because it can get all its nutrients from rain/moisture and nutrients falling from the leaves of the tree that supports it.

BUTTRESS TRUNK: Refers to a tree trunk that is wide at its base, like a cypress tree.

CAMOUFLAGE: An organism's ability to blend with its environment, thus protecting it from predators.

CARNIVORE: Any animal that eats meat.

CATFISH: A freshwater fish that is a scavenger. It has barbs on its dorsal and pectoral fins that help protect it.

CLIMATE: The average condition of the weather in a particular region over a period of time.

COLD-BLOODED: Having a body temperature that varies with the external environment.

COMMUNITY: A group of plants and animals living in a particular environment, working together to fulfill their individual needs.

COMPOUND LEAF: A leaf having two or more separate leaflets borne on a single stalk.

CONSERVATION: The wise and careful use of our natural resources.

CONSUMER: A user of goods and services; in a natural food chain, it represents an animal that must depend upon other plants and/or other animals for its energy.

CONTAMINATION: To make something impure or unclean.

COVER: A place of natural shelter for an animal or bird.

DECOMPOSER: A physical element, or organism, that causes other organisms, or physical elements, to break down and/or rot. Mushrooms for example, help to decompose dead logs.

DEER: A four legged herbivore. The white-tailed deer is the species found in the Everglades. The young have white spots on their brown fur that provide good camouflage.

DETRITUS: Bits of food, dead leaves, twigs, algae, remains of animals, etc. All are decomposing and returning nutrients to the soil to aid the growth of new plants and animals.

DIVERSITY: A term referring to variety or differences in the natural world. Biological diversity refers to variety in living things; species diversity refers to variety among different species; genetic diversity refers to the variety within a single species; and ecosystem diversity refers to differences in living communities.

DIVING BEETLE: Carries a bubble of air at the tip of their abdomen down with them when they dive. These beetles are scavengers. Larvae will eat water insects, small fish, and even one another.

DRAGONFLY: One of the oldest groups of insects on earth. Fossilized remains have been found showing that they existed 300 million years ago. They live near water, usually by stagnant ponds, marshes, or other slow-moving waters. Dragonflies have four large wings with a lace-like pattern of veins, long, slender bodies, huge heads, and prominent eyes. The wings remain out-stretched while the insect is at rest. They can fly as fast as 60 m.p.h. over long distances (as far as twenty miles). Dragonflies are predators that eat insects. Their eyes are so sensitive that they can see and catch small insects, like mosquitoes, while in full flight.

EAGLE, BALD: Formerly a federally endangered species, our national bird is still on endangered species lists in some states. Bald eagles nest in pairs, near water, where they feed.

ECOLOGY: The study of interrelationships of organisms and their environment.

ECOSYSTEM: The interaction of the biological community (all living things) and the physical environment (water, air, minerals).

EGRET: There are four types of egrets found in Everglades National Park: snowy egrets, reddish egrets, great egrets, and cattle egrets. All, except the cattle egret, are wading birds found on the mud-flats in the park.

ENDANGERED SPECIES: A species of plant or animal that throughout a significant portion of its range is in danger of extinction. There are fourteen endangered species in Everglades National Park.

ENDOSKELETON: The inside skeleton of animals.

ENERGY: The power or ability to make things move or happen. All organisms need food energy to stay alive.

ENERGY CYCLE: The sun's energy is used by plants to produce food, animals eat plants to produce energy, decomposers use the animal and plant matter to produce energy, and that matter is recycled to be used again by plants.

ENVIRONMENT: All those factors, both living and non-living, which make up the surroundings of an organism.

EPIPHYTE: Any plant that grows on another plant but does not use the host plant for nourishment.

EROSION: The loss of soil by the action of water or wind.

ESTUARY: The part of a wide, lower course of a river where its current is met and influenced by the sea. An arm of the sea that extends inward to meet the mouth of a river.

EVERGLADES: A river of grass; a shallow, fresh water river in southern Florida. Also used to designate other types of habitats in the same area.

EXOSKELETON: Outside skeleton, such as in crayfish, crabs, and other shelled animals.

EXOTIC: Not native, or something that did not grow in this area before humans brought it from another location.

EXTINCT: A species which has vanished from existence.

FAUNA: Animal life.

FERN: A plant characterized by fibrous roots and leaves called fronds. It usually thrives in the shade, does not flower, and has spores instead of seeds.

FIREFLY: Fireflies are not flies at all, but soft-bodied beetles. The light-giving abilities of the fireflies may extend also to the eggs and larvae. Scientists are studying fireflies because of their ability to make light without heat.

FLORA: Plant life.

FOOD: Any substance absorbed by the body which yields materials for energy, growth, and repair of tissue and regulation of the life process without harming the organism.

FOOD CHAIN: Sequence of organisms starting with green plants in which each is food for higher and more complex organisms.

FOOD WEB: The many connected food chains by which organisms of a community obtain their energy.

FOX: The grey fox is the only fox that is able to climb trees. They make dens in the ground, under rocks, and in the hollows of trees.

FUNGI: A group of plants that lack chlorophyll (are not green), and get nourishment from any organic source. They are important decomposers. Mushrooms are an example of fungi.

GAMBUSIA: See mosquitofish.

GAR FISH: This spotted, cigar-shaped fish is a favorite food for alligators; and Miccosukee people eat them, as well.

GARTER SNAKE: A common, harmless snake.

GROUND WATER: Water which enters the soil, following rain.

GUMBO LIMBO: This tree is sometimes called the “tourist tree” because its red, peeling bark looks like a tourist with a bad sunburn. If a limb is cut off and stuck in the ground, it will generate roots and become a tree. It is commonly found in hardwood hammocks.

HABITAT: The place where a plant or animal lives; an organism’s home. It takes up as much area as an organism needs to find its food, water, shelter, and space in the proper arrangement.

HABITAT DESTRUCTION: The destruction or break-down of an animal’s home or natural surroundings.

HAMMOCK: Scattered islands of hardwood trees and dense undergrowth which thrive on slightly elevated spots in the Everglades.

HAWK: A bird of prey that feeds on birds, rodents, snakes, insects, and frogs. Hawks can see all of the action from way up in the sky; their eyes are like binoculars. Their claws are designed to grasp prey while their hooked-beaks tear it the prey apart.

HERBIVORE: An organism that eats plants.

HERON: Birds which have long legs adapted to walking the marsh and on mud-flats. Their beaks are long and pointed to catch fish.

HIBERNATE: To spend the winter months in an inactive condition.

IBIS: Wading birds with long, curved bills. They feed on crayfish and other aquatic organisms.

INDIGO SNAKE: A primarily black snake that grows to over eight feet long and is the largest snake found in the Everglades. It is shiny black in color, except for the sides of its head and chin which are reddish. This is a threatened species protected by law.

INSECT: A classification of animals with an exoskeleton. Insects have three body parts and six legs.

INSTINCT: An inborn ability to do something.

INTERDEPENDENCE: The dependence of organisms on the activities of other organisms.

INTERRELATIONSHIPS: The relationships between organisms.

IRRIGATION: Water supplied to dry land by way of water wells, ditches, canals, and pumping systems.

LARVA: The immature form of any animal (generally an insect) that, at birth, is unlike its parents and must pass through one or more changes before assuming adult characteristics.

LICHEN: A plant that is made up of algae and fungus growing together. It grows on trees, rocks, etc.

LIMESTONE: A type of rock consisting mainly of calcium carbonate; fossilized shells.

LIMPKINS: Two-foot-tall birds which are found walking in wooded swamps in search of snails and crustaceans. They have a loud distinctive cry.

LOCOMOTION: The spontaneous movement of an organism from one place to another.

LYSILOMA TREE: This tree is known as the “tree snail tree” because tree snails prefer its smooth bark and lichen food source as its habitat.

MARSH: A vegetative zone of brackish or salt water in the southern Everglades. This area can be affected by tide changes

MARSH RABBIT: A small brown herbivore. They are prey for foxes and bobcats. They can swim thus, adapting them for living in a wetland habitat..

MARINE: Living in salt water.

MICROSCOPIC: Too small to be seen without the aid of a magnifying lens or microscope.

MIMICRY: A form of protective coloration, or behavior, in which an animal closely resembles another animal, insect, or an object in its environment. The animal being mimicked usually has a toxin which causes predators to avoid it. By initiating the toxic animal, the other animal may keep from being eaten.

MOLLUSK: A classification of animals with exoskeletons and shells. Univalve and bivalve snails and clams are examples.

MOSQUITO: Insects that are important in the Everglades food chains. Only the female bites, and a drop of blood gives her enough protein to make 200 to 400 eggs. Males eat nectar from flowers. There are forty-seven different kinds of mosquitoes in the Everglades, but only thirteen bite humans.

MOSQUITOFISH: A small fish, also called gambusia. They eat aquatic invertebrates, including mosquito larvae.

NATIONAL PARK: A federally-funded public land area maintained in its natural state for the benefit of all.

NATURAL RESOURCE: Resources found in our natural environment.

NICHE: The interaction of a specific organism with its environment; the organism’s special function within that environment.

NOURISHMENT: Food.

NOCTURNAL: An animal that feeds at night.

NYMPH: An intermediate, aquatic stage between egg and adult insects.

OMNIVOROUS: An animal that eats both plants and animals.

OPOSSUM: The only marsupial (pouched animal) in the Everglades. It is an omnivore and is nocturnal.

ORGANISM: Any living thing.

OSPREY: A large bird of prey that plunges feet first into the water to catch its prey. The osprey is also called the “fish hawk.”

OTTER: A brown web-footed animal that is adapted to living in the water. Its primary diet is fish, turtles, and frogs. It will also eat other animals, including baby alligators.

OXYGEN: A gas in the air that almost all living things need to survive.

PALMATE LEAF: Having leaflets or lobes radiating from one point.

PANTHER: Light brown nocturnal mammal. They are carnivores and feed primarily on deer, hogs, rabbits, raccoons, and other small mammals. Panthers need between 150 - 250 square miles of living space. Loss of habitat in the Everglades has caused the panther to become an endangered species.

PARASITE: Any organism that lives in or on another organism from whose body it takes nutrients.

PERIPHYTON: A combination of several algae which form a mat that is a base of the food chain of the fresh waters of the Everglades.

PESTICIDE: A chemical that is used to kill pests, especially insects.

PHOTOSYNTHESIS: The process by which plants with chlorophyll use the sun’s energy (light) to manufacture food (carbohydrates) and release oxygen.

PINNATE LEAF: Having leaflets, lobes, or divisions in a feather-like arrangement on each side of a common axis.

POISON IVY: A vine with leaves arranged in groups of three’s. It is an irritant to the skin.

POLLUTION: Contamination of soil, air, or water.

POPULATION: The total number of organisms living within a given area.

PREDATOR: Any animal which hunts live animals for its food.

PRESERVATION: A process of saving something in its natural state.

PREY: A predator's victim.

PRODUCER: An organism that produces or makes food for other organisms. Plants are producers, while animals are consumers.

RACCOONS: A brown or black, small, nocturnal mammal with a black mask on its face and a black and grey striped tail. They are omnivores.

RATTLESNAKE: The eastern diamondback rattlesnake is a member of a group of poisonous snakes called pit vipers. It has poisonous fangs that lie back in its mouth until needed, then they are brought erect in a striking position. The rattle on its tail, is made of special interlocking scales which hit against each other to sound. Rattlesnakes prey upon mice, rabbits, lizards, and other small ground animals, while they, themselves, are prey to owls, foxes, and hawks.

RECYCLE: To use something over again. Recycling helps to reduce our impact on the earth's resources.

REPTILE: An animal classification in which the animals are "cold-blooded" and are covered by smooth skin or scales. Alligators, snakes, and lizards are all reptiles.

SABAL PALM: The most common large, native palm found in the Everglades/South Florida. It is Florida's state tree.

SAPROPHYTE: An organism which lives off other dead and decaying organisms.

SERRATED LEAF: A leaf having notched, tooth-like projections.

SIMPLE LEAF: A leaf having no divisions or subdivisions.

SLOUGH: A wet area deeper than the surrounding wetland. In South Florida, the water in this depressed area flows from the north to southwest. There are sawgrass, cypress and willow sloughs in the Everglades.

SPECIES: A genetically and adaptively unique plant or animal which is able to reproduce itself and to evolve. For example all human beings are of the same species.

SWAMP: A wetland where the dominant plants are woody-stemmed (trees and shrubs). The water may be fresh or salty.

SYMBIOSIS: An association between unlike living plants and animals in which one or both are benefited and neither is harmed.

TERRITORIAL: A behavior pattern in animals consisting of the occupation and defense of a living space.

TREE SNAIL: A univalve mollusk with many different color combinations. This is a tree dwelling snail that feeds on microscopic lichen growing on trees in tropical hardwood hammocks.

WATER: A basic necessity for life. The lifeblood of the Everglades/South Florida.

WATER CYCLE: The never ending circle of change which water repeatedly undergoes.

WATER HYACINTH: This very attractive water plant is an exotic. It was probably brought into the country to be used in someone's backyard pond. Released into the wild, it has caused serious problems in our waterways.

WEATHER: The state of the atmosphere at a particular time, in a particular place.

WETLAND: An area of land that is wet at least some of the time, which contains unique soil and plants (e.g. swamps, bogs, marshes).

WHIRLIGIG BEETLES: These are beetles which have each eye divided into two parts so that the beetle can see both above and below the water at the same time. They swim on the water surface.

WOOD STORK: This is a wading bird that is white, with a lot of black in its wings. It has a black, bald head and is often called "flint head" or "iron head." It feeds by wading in shallow water, with its beak in the water and mouth open. When something touches hairs on its beak, it closes the bill. The wood stork has become endangered because of loss of habitat and its restrictive feeding habits. It will sometimes abandon its nest if enough food is not available.

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