

Science at the Cienega Vocabulary

abiotic factors – The non-living physical and chemical conditions (such as temperature, moisture, climate, etc.) in an environment.

abundance - The total or relative amount of something.

adaptation – A physical or behavioral characteristic that helps an organism survive in its environment.

benthic macroinvertebrate – A bottom dwelling, aquatic organism without a backbone, which can be seen with the naked eye.

biodiversity – The number of different types of organisms living in a location. Biodiversity is short for biological diversity.

biotic factors – The living components (plants and animals) in an environment.

cienega – The Spanish word for a wet, marshy area that is spring fed (a wetland).

climate change - A pattern of change affecting global or regional climate, as measured by such things as average temperature and rainfall, or a change in frequency of extreme weather conditions.

density – A measure of the amount of something in a given area.

diversity – The number of different kinds of something. A range of different things. Variety.

drought - A prolonged period of unusually low precipitation. A shortage of water usually results from this.

ecology – The study of the interactions of organisms with each other and their environment.

ecosystem – A community of living organisms (biotic factors) interacting with each other and their physical environment (abiotic factors).

food chain – The connection between organisms based on their energy relationships with each other. The hierarchy of who eats whom.

habitat – An area that includes all the necessities for an organism's survival. For animals this includes food, water and shelter in a suitable arrangement.

indicator – A measure, trend, or fact that provides information about the state or level of something.

larvae - An immature form of an insect or other animal that undergo some metamorphosis to become an adult. (note: larvae is plural, larva is singular)

life cycle – The stages of development that an organism goes through from egg (or seed) to adult and death.

macroinvertebrate – An organism without a backbone which can be seen with the naked eye.

phenology - The study of recurring plant and animal life cycle stages (such as leafing out, flowering, migration, etc.).

pollutant – Anything that alters an environment, making it less suitable for certain uses including survival of some biological organisms

preserve – To maintain something in its original or existing state.

quadrat - A small area of habitat, typically of one square meter, selected at random to act as sample for surveying or assessing ecological conditions.

riparian – An area next to or including a wetland, river, or stream. Organisms that rely on such areas are considered to be “riparian species.”

sample - A small set or portion of something used to give information about the whole.

scientific process – The method used as the basis of modern science to conduct systematic investigations. Observations are made, questions are asked, a hypothesis is made and tested, data are gathered and analyzed. Results lead to answers or more testing.

species – A group of organisms capable of reproducing to form fertile offspring.

transition zone – An area located between two distinct habitats that contains characteristics of both its surrounding habitats. A transition zone exhibits a gradual change from one habitat to another.

uplands – The area of land that is higher in elevation (uphill from) a nearby wetland or riparian area. Upland soils are drier than wetlands which in turn influences the vegetation that occurs there.

wetland – An area of land that is either covered by or saturated with water either seasonally or permanently.