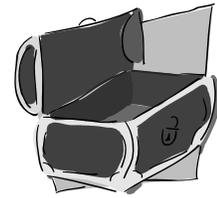


Glossary



Abscission

Separation of leaves or other structures from an axis by the formation of an layer that reduces and then cuts off the flow of water and nutrients between leaf and tree

Acclimation

Process by which plants become increasingly resistant to subfreezing temperature without sustaining injury.

Adhesion

Molecular attraction that holds the surfaces of two substances together e.g. attraction of water molecules to other kinds of molecules

Aerosols

Particles of solid and liquid suspended in the atmosphere

Almost Closed System

A system in which almost no matter enters or leaves; the Earth system is considered an almost closed system because only a small amount of gases and particles enter or leave the system at the top of the atmosphere. In studying the Earth as a whole you use

Annotate

To label

Anthocyanin

Pigment in leaves that is bright red and purple

Aquifer

A body of permeable rock or gravel capable of storing water underground

Atmospheric Carbon

Carbon that is in gaseous form (combined with other atoms like oxygen) that make up part of the Earth's atmosphere such as carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide

Average Surface Temperature

The surface temperature of the Earth averaged over a wide region and over a long period of time

AVHRR Satellite

Satellite that carries the Advanced Very High Resolution Radiometer instrument

Axis

The invisible straight line between the North and South poles

Biogeochemical Cycles

Movement of chemical elements from organisms to physical environment back to organisms in a circular cycle

Biomass

Total mass of all the organisms of a given type or in an area or region

Biome

A major ecological community type (e.g., rain forest, grassland, desert)

Biota

All of the organisms living in a particular region, including plants, animals, and microorganisms

Boreal

Of or relating to northern regions or the Northern Hemisphere

Boundary

A line or a plane that divides two different areas or regions

Broad-leaved Trees

Trees that have wide and flat leaves rather than needlelike leaves

Budburst

The opening or breaking of buds which are hard protective covers containing miniature leaves. It is a seasonal event that signals the start of leaf growth or green-up

Canopy

The uppermost layer of plant leaves that are detected by satellite remote sensing

Capillary Action

Attraction of the surface of a liquid to the surface of a solid which is expressed as the readiness of a liquid such as water, to flow through a solid such as paper

Carbon Cycle

The movement of carbon through the surface, interior, and atmosphere of the Earth, which may involve organisms

Carbon Fixation

The process by which carbon taken from the carbon dioxide in the air is incorporated in the cells of a plant or microorganism, such as in photosynthesis

Carotene

Pigment in leaves that is orange

Celestial Sphere

An imaginary sphere of infinite extent with the Earth at its center on which the stars, planets, and other heavenly bodies appear to be located

Chemical Cycle

The movement of various chemicals through the surface, interior, and atmosphere of the Earth and the chemical reactions that impact the form of those chemicals

Chemical Energy

The energy produced or absorbed in the process of a chemical reaction

Chlorophyll

A pigment which gives plants their green color and traps light energy for plants, algae, and some bacteria to use in making food

Chromatography

The separation of substances in a mixture by placing the mixture in a mobile phase (water or other solvent) that is placed over a stationary phase (e.g. paper)

Climate

The statistical collective of the weather conditions of a specified area during a specified time period

Climate Cycles

Alternating episodic climate events that recur with some regularity, but are not strictly periodic

Climatic Island

An area of uniform climate, such as a mountain top, that is isolated from other areas similar to it

Climatogram

A graph showing the long term average of temperature and precipitation totals for a region (a year or longer)

Climatograph

See climatogram

Closed System

A system in which no matter enters or leaves

Cohesion

Force holding a solid or liquid together due to the attraction of like molecules, for example the attraction of water molecules to each other

Components

Parts of a whole

Conifers/Coniferous

Any cone-bearing trees, chiefly evergreen trees of the class Coniferinae, including pine, fir, and spruce that have needle-like leaves

Connections

Links between one component of the Earth system and another

Consumers

Living things that use resources in their environment to survive

Continental Climate

Climate characteristic of the interior of a large land mass, generally marked by large annual and daily ranges of temperature, low relative humidity and generally moderate or small amounts of rainfall.

Contrast

The ratio between maximum and minimum values

Control

An experimental set up and result against which other experiments that incorporate modifications or changes and the results of those experiments are compared

Crown

The leafy portion of a tree or shrub. Even the lowest branches of a tree or shrub are part of the crown

Cryosphere

Part of the Earth that is frozen, comprising ice sheets, glaciers, and sea areas covered by ice

Dew Point

The temperature to which air must be cooled to reach saturation of water vapor to occur

Diagram

A visual representation of a system used to communicate information about that system to others

Diurnal

Daily, as in diurnal rotation of the Earth

Dormancy

State of suspended growth and metabolism

Earth System

The components that comprise the environment of the Earth, including the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, pedosphere (soils), cryosphere (ice), and biosphere, and the processes that cause them to interact

Earth System Science

An area of scientific investigation that focuses on the processes which take place in the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, pedosphere (soils), cryosphere (ice), and biosphere and the processes that allow them to interact.

Ecliptic

Where the Earth's orbit intersects the celestial sphere

Ecologist

A scientist who studies the relations between organisms and their environment

Ecology

The study of the relations between organisms and their environment

Ecosystem

A local biological community and its pattern of interaction with its environment

Elevation

The vertical distance above mean sea level

Energy Cycle

The movement of energy through the surface, interior, and atmosphere of the Earth in all of its forms

Environment

The surrounding conditions that affect the quality of life of plants and animals

Environmental variables

Physical properties that describe the state of the environment

Equator

An invisible circle that divides the Earth into two hemispheres

Equatorial

Located at the equator or in the plane of the equator

Equinox

(*equal night*) when the sun crosses the equator, causing the length of day and night to be equal in both hemispheres

Estuary

Semi-inclosed coastal body of water which has a free connection with the open sea

Flux

The amount of material flowing through a specified surface or system per unit time

Fluxes

The rate of flow of some quantity (such as water, energy or carbon for example) from one place or reservoir to another

Frazzle Ice

Known also as frazil ice, flowing water ice that forms platelets rather than continuous sheets on rivers and other moving bodies of water

GIS

Geographic Information System

Grassland

An area of natural vegetation dominated by grasses (areas are called steppes or prairies in temperate regions and savannahs in tropical regions)

Green-down

When plants start changing colors and/or lose their leaves at the end of the growing season

Green-up

When plants sprout new growth

Grey-scale

A range of tones from white to black that indicate on a map or other visualization the relative amounts of the quantity being described

Growing Season

That part of the yearly plant growth cycle when vegetation comes out of winter dormancy, grows, and reproduces.

Hemisphere

Half of a spherical or roughly spherical body (such as the Earth)

Icosahedron

20-sided polyhedron

Insolation

The energy that comes to the Earth from the Sun (INcoming SOLar radiATION)

Interconnections

The processes by which the different components of the Earth system interact with each other

Kinetic Energy

The energy an object has because of its motion

Land Cover

Usually vegetation but in the absence of vegetation an indication of what is on the land surface

Landmark Value

The point on a color scale where the representative value undergoes a distinctive change

Latent Heat

The energy stored or used by a substance to produce a change in phase, either between solid and liquid, liquid and gas, or solid and gas

Latitude

The angular distance of a part of the Earth that is north or south of the Earth's

equator; a region of the Earth considered in relation to its distance from the equator

Lichen

A combination of an alga (or a cyanobacterium) and a fungus, living in symbiotic relationship characteristically forming a crustlike, scaly or branching growth on rocks or tree trunks

Limiting Factor

An ecosystem variable whose presence or absence limits the growth of the ecosystem elements

Lithosphere

The solid portion of the Earth

Liverwort

Moss-like plants that grow and help decay rocks or tree trunks on damp ground

Longitude

Distance measurement that goes from one pole to another pole around the outside of the Earth

Map Projection

The systematic arrangement of latitudes and longitudes (and associated surface features) that shows a curved surface on a flat plane

Marine Climate

Climate of a region that is affected by the sea. Generally characterized by mild winters, cool summers, and an even distribution of rainfall through the year

Maxima

(Plural of maximum) the greatest possible amount or degree

Maximum Greenness

When vegetation vigor peaks

Mercator Projection

A map projection of the Earth in which the latitude lines are drawn as straight lines the same length as the equator and cross the longitude lines at right angles. The biggest disadvantage is the distortion of the land near the poles

Meridian

An imaginary circle on the Earth's surface that passes through the North and South poles

Mid-latitude

The latitude range generally between 30 degrees to 60 degrees

NDVI

Normalized Difference Vegetation Index

Nitrogen Cycle

A series of chemical processes, mostly occurring in organisms, in which nitrogen atoms are circulated in the Earth systems

NOAA

National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration

Northern Hemisphere

The half of the Earth that lies north of the equator

Ocean Currents

The movement of ocean water in a regular way along a defined path that can either be cyclic or continuous

Open System

A system in which mass and energy enter and leave

Ozone

One of the allotropes of oxygen (O₃), sometimes referred to as tri-oxygen

Perpendicular

A line at right angles to a line or plane (for example, when you watch a sunset, you are standing perpendicular to the horizon)

Petiole

Slender stem that supports the leaf or leaf stalk

pH

A measure of acidity on a scale of 0 to 14, 0 being all hydrogen ion (highly acidic), 14 being no hydrogen, all hydroxyl ions (highly basic)

Phenology

The study of natural response of living organisms to seasonal and climatic changes in their environment. Examples of phenological events include migration of birds and butterflies, flowering, salmon spawning, etc. Plant phenology includes green-up and green-down

Photosynthesis

The process used by green plants, algae and photosynthetic bacteria to use the energy of sunlight to convert carbon dioxide and water into carbohydrates, through the green pigment chlorophyll; this process releases oxygen and is the chief source of atmosphere

Polar

Regions on the Earth poleward of 60 degrees latitude

Polyhedron

A solid formed or bounded by planes or faces

Potential Energy

The energy an object has or the objects' stored capacity to do work because of its configuration and position

Potential Growing Season

That part of the yearly temperature cycle when the temperature is above freezing, thus enabling plant growth to occur.

Processes

The progression of physical interactions between different components of the Earth system and between sub-components of the Earth system

Producers

Living things that as a result of their biologic processes release material into their environment that may be used by other living things

Protractor

A measuring device used to measure angles

Region

An area defined by a common feature or features

Relationships

Processes by which different components of the Earth system, or parts of the components of the Earth system interact and affect each other

Remote Sensing

A method of obtaining information about something without coming into physical contact with it

Reservoirs

A space to store a substance, or a supply of a substance

Resolution

The smallest area that can be identified individually in a map or satellite picture, or the smallest measurable change in a quantity

Respiration

A process by organisms that converts the energy in organic materials into energy for use by cells

Rural

An area with very little man made structures

Satellite

Any natural or man made object that orbits an body in space, man made satellites usually carry instruments for measuring various things about the Earth

Scale

The regular markings on an instrument that permit the readings of a measured quantity, or the relative size of an object or area used to help define the processes that affect that object or area

Seasonal Cycle

The regular progression through the year through winter, spring, summer, and fall

Senescence

The changes that occur in an organism between maturity and death; in a plant this is equivalent to “green-down” and is associated with a reduction and/or halt of plant photosynthesis

Sensible Heat

The energy involved in heating (or cooling in the case of a loss of sensible heat) of a surface or object

Solar Energy

Energy coming from the sun

Solstice

(*Stand still*) when the sun is at its greatest distance from the equator, resulting in the longest day in one hemisphere and the shortest day in the other hemisphere; the sun appears to “stand still” when it reaches its highest point on this day

Southern Hemisphere

The half of the Earth that lies south of the equator

Spatial Relationship

Where bodies are located in regards to each other (e.g., the Sun and the Earth)

Sub Polar

A climate zone lying between the temperate and polar zones

Sub Tropical

A climate zone lying between the tropic and temperature zones

Suburban

An land area in which there is a mixture of man-made structures and open spaces

Surface Temperature

The temperature of the surface or the air next to the surface of the Earth

System

A group of components that interact to produce a whole (in the case of the Earth system) or a specific results (in the case of a machine)

Tannin

Bitter waste product in leaves that is brown; common name for tannic acid or similar compounds

Temperature

A measure of the energy in an object or gas, measured with a thermometer

Thermal inertia

A material body's resistance to a change in temperature

Time Scales

The time period over which different processes occur ranging from seconds and minutes for the formation of clouds to billions of years for the formation of the Earth

Transpiration

Loss of water by plants mainly through the stomata to the atmosphere

Tropic of Cancer

The parallel of latitude 23° 27' north of the equator; the most northerly latitude at which the sun can shine directly overhead

Tropic of Capricorn

The parallel of latitude 23° 27' south of the equator; the most southerly latitude at which the sun can shine directly overhead

Tropical

Of, occurring in, or characteristic of the tropics

Tundra

Treeless plains that lie poleward of the tree line in the Arctic. Tundra lies mostly over permafrost and is not permanently covered with snow

Urban

Area mostly covered with man made structures

Variables

A characteristic that can be measured and can assume different values

Vegetation Vigor

Amount of plant growth

Visualization

Display of information graphically or on a map using color or grey-scales, and/or lines and symbols

Water Cycle

The cycle by which water is moved between the different components of the Earth system (atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, pedosphere, cryosphere, and biosphere) in its various states (solid, liquid, and gas)

Watershed

The total area from which water is drained by a river and its tributaries

Weather

The day to day state of the atmosphere, mainly with respect to its affect on life and human activities

Winds

The movement of air relative to the surface of the Earth

Xanthophyll

Pigment in leaves that is yellow