

**Vocabulary for the Adaptation and Variation: Colorado Animals and Plants guided program and workshop**

These are words that are commonly used in the workshop. Following the definition for most of the vocabulary words, we have included a sentence in *italics* that incorporates the word.

**Adaptation** - one of the basic phenomena of biology; the process whereby an organism becomes better suited to its habitat.

*Plants with smooth-edged leaves are better adapted to warmer climates.*

**Biology –** A science that deals with living beings and life processes.

*Kyle planned to study biology in college to work at the zoo.*

**Characteristics** - Features that can be used to identify or distinguish between different things.

*The shape of the leaves is one characteristic used to identify a plant.*

**Classification** – A way of arranging things into groups.

*The scientists used a classification that grouped fossils by whether they lived in water or on land.*

**Consumer** – An organism that relies upon feeding on other organisms for survival.

*The geese were the main consumers of the plants near the pond.*

**Decomposer –** Organisms that feed on dead material causing the chemical breakdown of the material.

*An earthworm is a common decomposer.*

**Ecosystem –** An ecological community and its environment functioning as a unit in nature.

*The ecosystem was disrupted by the massive oil spill.*

**Food Chain –** An arrangement of organisms in an ecological community such that each uses the next member as a food source.

*The wolf was at the top of the food chain in this ecosystem.*

**Food Web –** A community of organisms where there are several inter-related food chains.

*Scientists discovered a complex food web in the ecosystem.*

**Producer –** An organism that produces carbohydrates, fats, and proteins from simple inorganic molecules using energy from light.

*Plants on land and algae in water are important producers.*

**Predator** – An animal that kills its prey and then feeds on it.

*Sharks are some of the largest predators hunting in the oceans.*

**Prey** – An animal hunted or caught for food.

*The sharks’ prey consists of fish, squid, and many other types of see animals.*