



Museum of Natural History

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

Vocabulary for Adaptation and Variation: Colorado Animals and Plants guided program and Animal Adaptation 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 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.
- 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 sea animals.
- 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.