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| Natural selection | The process in which, over time, the best-adapted members of a species will survive and reproduce. This process makes change in living things possible. |
| Adaptive radiation | The development of a number of new species from a common ancestor; the new species are adapted to inhabit different niches. |
| Ecological succession | Changes that take place in over time in the types of organisms that live in an area. |
| Primary succession | The development of new life in areas where no organisms or soil previously existed, such as on bare rock; the first organisms may be lichen spores carried by the wind. |
| Secondary succession | The reintroduction of life after a disturbance to an area that already has soil and was once the home of living organisms. |
| Pioneer species | Organisms such as lichens and other plants that are the first to survive and reproduce in an area; these organisms change the abiotic and biotic conditions of an area so that other organisms can survive there. |
| Climax community | A mature community, such as a boreal forest, tropical rainforest, grassland or desert, that continues to change over time. |
| Sustainability | The ability of an ecosystem to sustain ecological processes and maintain biodiversity over time; using natural resources in a way that maintains ecosystem health now and for future generations. |
| Land use | The ways in which we use land, such as for urban development, agriculture, industry, mining and forestry. |
| Resource use or Resource exploitation | The ways in which we obtain and use naturally occurring materials such as soil, wood, water, gas, oil, or minerals. |
| Habitat loss | The destruction of habitats that usually results from human activities |
| Habitat fragmentation | The division of habitats into smaller, isolated pieces or fragments. |
| Deforestation | The clearing or logging of forests without replanting. |
| Soil degradation | Damage to soil - for example, as a result of deforestation or the removal of topsoil from bare land by water and wind erosion. |
| Soil compaction | The squeezing together of soil particles so that the air spaces between them are reduced |
| Aeration | Mixing with air; one method used t reduce run-off is to mechanically remove small plugs of soil to improve air and water flow through the soil. |
| Contamination | The introduction of chemicals, toxins, wastes, or micro-organisms into the environment in concentrations that are harmful to living things. |
| Traditional ecological knowledge | Ecological information, passed down from generation to generation, that reflects human experiences with nature gained over centuries. |
| Native species | Plants and animals that naturally inhabit an area. |
| Introduced or foreign species | Plants, animals, or micro-organisms that can take over the habitats of native species or invade their bodies. |
| Invasive species | Introduced organisms that can take over the habitats of native species or invade their bodies. |