

## **Envirothon Wildlife Glossary**

**Abiotic** – a non-living factor in an environment ie. light, water, temperature.

**Aestivation** – dormancy, generally seasonally

**Accipiter** – A hawk of the genus *Accipiter*, characterized by short wings and a long tail.

**Aquatic** – growing, living in or frequenting water

**Arboreal** – tree dweller

**Autotroph** – an organism capable of manufacturing its own food by synthesis of inorganic materials, as in photosynthesis.

**Bergman's rule** – among forms of a particular species, body size tends to be larger in the cooler regions of its range and smaller in the warmer regions.

**Brood** – the offspring of a bird just hatched.

**Browse** – (v) to eat the twigs and leaves of woody plants; (n) commonly used in wildlife management to signify brushy plants utilized by deer.

**Buteo** – Any of the various hawks of the genus *Buteo*, characterized by broad wings and broad, rounded tails.

**Carapace** – the upper or dorsal surface of a turtle's shell.

**Carnivore** – An animal belonging to the order Carnivora, including predominantly meat-eating mammals.

**Carrion** – the bodies of dead animals usually found in nature in a decaying state.

**Carrying capacity** – The number of wildlife species that a given unit of habitat will support without damage to the habitat.

**Cast** – to regurgitate indigestible prey remains

**Circadian** – designating a biological period of about 24 hours.

**Climax stage** – the final stage of plant succession.

**Consumptive use** – any use that involves activity resulting in the loss of wildlife i.e. hunting.

**Contiguous forests** – Forests that share an edge or boundary, touching.

**Coverts** – One or more of a group of feathers covering the bases of the longer main feathers of a bird's wings or tail.

**Covey** – a small group or flock, often a family group, of birds such as quail.

**Crepuscular** – appearing or becoming active at twilight or dawn.

**Clutch** – eggs laid and incubated by a female bird per nesting.

**Corridor** – areas of continuous habitat that permit animals to travel securely from one habitat to another.

**Dabbling ducks** – duck species that principally feed in shallow water by “tipping up” or dabbling on the surface.

**Depredation** – the act of preying upon. Mostly wildlife damage to farmer's crops.

**Diurnal** – A term used to describe an animal that is most active by day.

**Diving ducks** – duck species that feed principally by diving below the surface

**Dorsal** – of or pertaining to the upper surface.

**Dump nest** – eggs deposited by more than one female in a single nest.

**Edge** – the place where two or more different plant communities, successional stages or vegetative stages come together or meet.

**Endemic** – confined to a certain area or region.

**Estivation** – a state of inactivity during prolonged periods of drought or high temperatures.

**Exotic** – Not a native species. Was either introduced or escaped.

**Flyway** – fly routes established by migratory birds.

**Food chain or food web** – the relationship between autotrophs, herbivores, and carnivores.

**Forest Game** – Game species that are managed by the DNR whose habitat needs are found mainly in forests. These species in Maryland include wild turkey, ruffed grouse, gray and red foxes and squirrels.

**Furbearers** – Various animals that have a thick coat of soft hair covering their bodies. The Maryland DNR regulates the harvesting of 14 furbearing species: beaver, bobcat (closed season), coyote, fisher, gray fox, long-tailed weasel, mink, muskrat, nutria, opossum, otter, raccoon, red fox and skunk.

**Guard hairs** – Long, coarse hairs that forms a protective coating over an animal's under fur.

**Harriers** – Any of the various slender, narrow-winged hawks of the genus *Circus*, which prey on small animals.

**Harvest** – proportion or number of a wildlife population brought to bag by hunters; in wildlife management, killing an animal.

**Herbivore** – An animal that eats plants.

**Herpetology** – The scientific study of reptiles and amphibians as a branch of Zoology.

**Hibernation** – passing the winter or a portion of it in a state of sleep

**Indigenous** – a naturally occurring species.

**Insectivore** – a mammal or organism that feeds on insects.

**Inventory** – the process of counting or identifying animals.

**Keel** – a ridge down the back or along the plastron of a turtle or a longitudinal ridge  
On a dorsal scale in certain snakes.

**Lateral** – pertaining to the side.

**Limiting factor** – Anything that affects a species population. It could result from causes in nature as well as human activities. Examples include food, water, shelter, space, disease, predation, climatic conditions, pollution, hunting, poaching and accidents.

**Litter** – the number of young born with each birthing.

**Mandibles** – either the upper or lower part of the beak in birds.

**Marsupial** – A mammal of the order Marsupialia that includes kangaroos, opossums, bandicoots and wombats. These females have pouches that contain mammary glands and that shelter the young until fully developed.

**Melanistic** – Abnormally dark pigmentation of the skin or other tissues. Black pigmented.

**Molt** – the process of shedding or replacing feathers.

**Monogamous** – term used when one male breeds with one female.

**Mortality (death rate)** – the number of animals that die each year.

**Natality (birth rate)** – ability of a population to increase; reproductive rate.

**Niche** – that part of a habitat particularly suited to the requirements of a given species.

**Nocturnal** – active by night; the opposite of diurnal.

**Nonconsumptive use** – any use that does not directly kill wildlife, i.e. bird watching, hiking, photography.

**Omnivore** – An animal or organism that feeds on both animal and plant matter.

**Ornithology** – The scientific study of birds as a branch of zoology.

**Parasite** – an organism that lives by deriving benefit (usually doing harm) from another organism.

**Philopatry** – annual homing to the same nesting area and often the same nest site.

**Polygamy or polygyny** – term used when a male animal breeds with many females.

**Passerine** – Birds of the order Passeriformes, which include perching birds and songbirds such as the jays, blackbirds, finches, warblers and sparrows.

**Pelage** – The coat of a mammal, consisting of hair, fur, wool or other soft covering, as distinct from bare skin.

**Population** – the number of a particular species in a defined area.

**Population dynamics** – factors regulating population levels including natality, productivity and mortality.

**Plastron** – The ventral surface of the shell of a turtle or tortoise.

**Recruitment** – addition of a number of young to an adult population of breeders.

**Riparian area** – the area of influence between upland habitats and aquatic habitats.

**SAV (submerged aquatic vegetation)** – vascular plants that live and grow completely underwater.

**Scat** – The excrement droppings of an animal.

**Species** – populations of animals that possess common characteristics and freely interbreed in nature and produce fertile offspring.

**Species richness** – the number of wildlife species found in a given area.

**Taxonomy** – the science of the classification of animals or plants.

**Torpor** – temporary loss of all or part of the power of motion.

**Upland game** – Game species that are managed by the DNR whose habitat needs are usually found in upland areas. These species in Maryland include Eastern cottontail rabbit, snowshoe hare (closed season), bobwhite quail, ringneck pheasant, woodchuck and crow.

**Trophic level** – a feeding level in the food chain of an ecosystem characterized by organisms that occupy a similar functional position in the ecosystem.

**Ventral** – of or pertaining to the lower surface.

**Waterfowl** – water birds, usually referring to ducks, geese and swans.