

**Paris Mountain State Park
Forest Ecology Vocabulary List**

Abiotic factors: the nonliving part(s) of an ecosystem (for example, water, rocks).

Adaptation: characteristic or behavior that helps an organism survive in its environment.

Biotic factors: the living part(s) of an ecosystem (animals, plants – dead leaves too).

Circumference: the measurement of the outside of a circle, such as a tree trunk.

Consumer: an organism that consumes energy made by plants (all animals consume).

Decomposer: organism that breaks down living or dead plants and animals, and recycles their nutrients (for example, fungi and bacteria are decomposers).

Diversity: the variety of species present in an ecosystem.

Ecology: the study of relationships between living organisms and their environment.

Ecosystem: all the living and nonliving parts of an environment.

Forest: a community of plants, animals, and other living and nonliving parts where trees are the most visible members.

Forest layers:

Forest floor – bottom layer, made of soil, decomposing leaves and other organisms.

Herb layer – layer near the ground, made of soft-stemmed small plants.

Shrub layer – middle layer made of low woody plants with branching trunks.

Understory layer – fourth layer up made of smaller, shade tolerant trees.

Canopy layer – highest layer made by the tallest trees that shade the lower layers.

Habitat: the place where an organism lives.

Niche: the role of an organism in the environment.

pH: amount of acid in a solution. The pH scale is from most acidic(1) to most basic (14).

Population: all the organisms of one species in a community.

Producer: an organism that produces (makes) energy from the sun (plants are producers).

Predator: an animal that kills and eats other animals.

Prey: an animal that is killed and eaten by other animals.

Temperature: measurement of the amount of energy in an object.

Watershed: a region in a green mountain valley, where water drains into a common area, often a river or lake.