

Aquatic Ecosystems

Guided Notes

Section 1: Freshwater Ecosystems

Freshwater Ecosystems

- The types of organisms in an aquatic ecosystem are mainly determined by the water's salinity. As a result, aquatic ecosystems are divided into freshwater and marine ecosystems.
- Freshwater ecosystems include ponds lakes streams rivers and wetlands
- Wetlands are areas of land that are periodically underwater or whose soil contains a great deal of moisture.

Characteristics of Aquatic Ecosystems

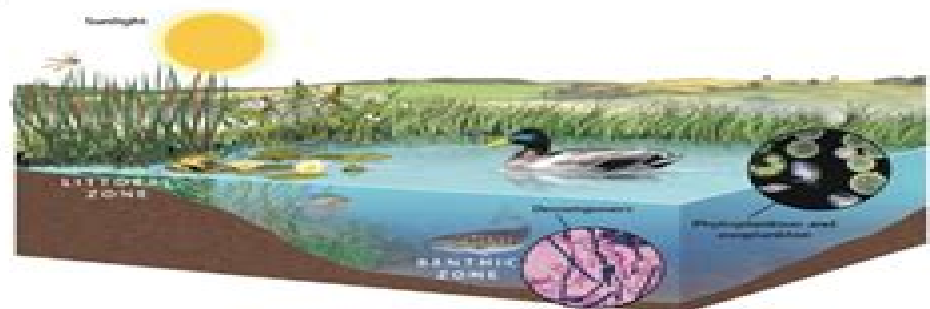
- Factors such as temperature, sunlight, oxygen, and nutrients determine which organisms live in which area of the water.
- Aquatic ecosystems contain several types of organisms that are grouped by their location and by their adaptation.
- Three groups of aquatic organisms include plankton, nekton, and benthos.
- plankton are the mass of mostly microscopic organisms that float or drift freely in the water, and can be microscopic animals called zooplankton or microscopic plants called phytoplankton.
- Nekton are all organisms that swim actively in open water, independent of currents.
- Benthos are bottom-dwelling organisms of the sea or ocean and are often attached to hard surfaces.
- Decomposers are also aquatic organisms.

Lakes and Ponds

- Lakes, ponds, and wetlands can form naturally where groundwater reaches the Earth's surface.
- Humans intentionally create artificial lakes by damming flowing rivers and streams to use them for power, irrigation, water storage, and recreation.
- Lakes and ponds can be structured into horizontal and vertical zones. The types of organisms present depend on the amount of sunlight available.

Life in a Lake

- The littoral zone is a shallow zone in a freshwater habitat where light reaches the bottom and nurtures plants and aquatic life is diverse and abundant.
- Some plants are rooted in the mud underwater with their upper leaves and stems above water. Other plants have floating leaves.
- In open water, plants, algae, and some bacteria capture solar energy to make their own food during photosynthesis.
- Some bodies of fresh water have areas so deep that there is too little light for photosynthesis.
- Bacteria live in the deep areas of freshwater. Fish adapted to cooler, darker water also live there.
- Eventually, dead and decaying organisms reach the benthic zone.
- The benthic zone is the region near the bottom of a pond, lake or ocean which is inhabited by decomposers, insect larvae, and clams.
- Animals that live in lakes and ponds have adaptations that help them obtain what they need to survive.
- For example, water beetles use the hairs under their bodies to trap surface air so that they can breathe during their dives for food.



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