



A Glossary of Migration Terms

Items with a * are in the glossary for the whole guide, other items are specific to this section.

Adaptation* - a genetically controlled characteristic (anatomical, physiological or behavioral) of an organism that increases its chances of survival and reproduction; also refers to the evolutionary process that creates such a trait

Bosque* (BOH-skay) - Spanish for “woods” or “forest”; in the Southwest it has been used to describe the cottonwood area adjacent to a river (note on pronunciation: use long “o” as in “bow and arrow,” otherwise you are actually saying the word “bosky” from old English, an adjective meaning wooded; the English poet Robert Burns once wrote a poem titled “The Bosky Bourne” [the wooded creek])

Climate Change - current patterns in climate data show that our planet’s global surface temperature is rising. This change is linked to the dramatic increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that has occurred over the past two centuries. [From the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: <http://www.education.noaa.gov/Climate/>]

Flyway* - the path taken by birds during their annual migrations; many birds will take the same route following a river or mountain ridge as landmarks for their journey

Game bird - a bird hunted for sport or food, or, a member of a large group of birds that includes pheasants, grouse, quails, guineafowl, guans, etc.

Habitat* - the kind of place where an organism usually lives; it includes the arrangement of food, water, shelter and space that is suitable to meet an organism’s needs; think of it as the “address” where an organism lives

Migration* - any cyclical movements (usually annual) during the life of an animal at regular intervals and that always include a return trip to where they began

Omnivore* - an animal that eats both plants and animals

Phenology - the study of cyclic and seasonal natural phenomena (such as birds migrating, plants flowering and insects emerging), especially in relation to climate and plant and animal life

Range - the range or distribution of a species is the geographical area within which that species can be found

Riparian* - relating to or living or located on the bank of a natural fresh watercourse such as a river, stream, pond or lake

Sexual dimorphism - the difference in appearance between males and females of the same species, such as in color, shape, size, and structure, that are caused by the inheritance of one or the other sexual pattern in the genetic material



Species* - a unit of classification that refers to a population or series of populations whose members are able to interbreed under natural conditions and do not breed with any other species; for young audiences, an acceptable definition is that a species is a unit of classification that refers to a population (or a group) or a series of populations (or groups) of closely related and similar organisms

Species richness* - the number of species in a community or location

Torpor - a state of decreased physiological activity in an animal which allows the animal to survive cold temperatures or reduced food availability. Animals enter torpor by reducing their metabolisms

Trachea - a large membranous tube reinforced by rings of cartilage, extending from the larynx to the bronchial tubes and conveying air to and from the lungs; the windpipe

Wetland* - a transitional zone between dry land and aquatic (water) areas, which stays wet at least part of the year because the water table is at the surface; includes wet meadows, marshes, sloughs, ponds and small lakes

Zygodactyl - a bird with feet with two toes facing front and two toes facing back