Adaptation – a process that makes living things better suited to their way of life

Artificial selection – a deliberate form of selection used in breeding plants and animals; human selection of genetic traits as opposed to natural selection of genetic traits

Cladogram – an evolutionary family tree; a way of visually presenting relationships between organisms

Coevolution – a form of evolution in which inter-dependent living things affect one another’s adaptations

Convergent Evolution – the evolution of similar characteristics in unrelated species due to similar environmental stresses; example: thorns on a rose and spines on a cactus

Darwinism – a theory of evolution by natural selection put forward by Charles Darwin

Evolution - a theory that explains the origin and development of life on earth; the process of speciation; a gradual change in a group of living things

Extinction – the permanent disappearance of a species

Fossil – the remains of a living thing that have been preserved over time

Gene – a basic unit of heredity in a living thing that carries the instructions needed to make a particular protein, which build and control all cells in the body

Gene pool – all the genes in a breeding population

Genetic Variation – genetic diversity in a population; natural differences between living things

Genotype – the genetic makeup of a cell or living thing
**Hybrid** – the offspring of parents from two different species. Example: a horse and a donkey make a mule. Hybrids are common in the plant kingdom and uncommon in the animal kingdom.

**Mimic** – a living thing that imitates another. Example: some flies have evolved to look like bees, with yellow and black stripes.

**Missing link** – a missing page in the evolutionary fossil record; the lack of a transitional form between two organisms.

**Mutation** – a change in a cell’s genetic material.

**Natural Selection** – a “weeding out” process that favors the fittest and best adapted form of an organism.

**Phenotype** – the visible characteristics produced by a genotype. Example: blue eyes, brown hair etc.

**Polymorphic** – when members of the same species have several different genotypes; example: humans have several different blood types.

**Speciation** – the development of a new species from an existing species.

**Sexual Selection** – a “weeding out” process that favors the most sexually attractive and virile individuals in a population. What is considered sexually attractive is subject to opposite sex preference.

**Transitional Form** – a species that links two groups of living things; a life form that falls between two other life forms in the evolutionary fossil record.