

## Vocabulary Chapter 21 Ecosystems of the Past

### **fossil**

A cast or skeleton of an organism preserved in stone

*Example: Dinosaur fossils were formed in ancient swamps.*

### **paleontologist**

A scientist who studies ancient life through the examination of fossils

*Example: The hard work of paleontologists helped create the image of Tyrannosaurus rex..*

### **radioactive dating**

A scientific method of determining the age of fossils

*Example: Potassium 40 and Carbon 12 are used to date fossils.*

### **Pangea**

A super continent from the earth's past which slowly broke into four continents and drifted apart through the process of continental drift

*Example: Pangea once included Africa, North America, South America, Europe, and Asia.*

### **paleoecosystem**

Ecosystems from the earth's past

*Example: Giant dragonflies and huge ferns were all part of the Carboniferous palecosystem.*

### **magma**

Molten rock at the center of the earth.

*Example: At Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, we observed the red hot magma flowing to the sea.*

### **plankton**

Small aquatic organisms that float with the currents of the sea and fresh water

*Example: Most of the earth's oxygen comes from the photosynthesis of plankton.*

### **spore**

One-celled reproductive bodies

*Example: Some people are allergic to mushroom spores growing in damp places.*

### **strata**

Historical layers in ancient rock beds

*Example: We can see the strata of the geologic past in the Grand Canyon.*

**herbivore**

A plant eating animal

*Example: Horses and cows are herbivores.*

**mammals**

A group of warm-blooded animals that give live birth and nurse their young

*Example: Humans, whales, and mice are all mammals.*

**colonization**

The process in which a group of organisms moves in and reproduces in a new area.

*Example: The weeds quickly colonized the vacant lot..*

**ecosystem**

A living community

*Example: The aquarium in my office is an ecosystem.*

**arboreal**

Of or pertaining to trees

*Example: Monkeys are arboreal animals.*

**primates**

A group of mammals characterized by large brains, frontal eyes, and high intelligence

*Examples: Monkeys, apes, tarsiers, and humans are all primates.*

**omnivore**

An animal that eats both plants and meat

*Example: Most humans are omnivores.*

**Neanderthals**

A primitive group of early human-like hominids

*Example: The cavemen were Neanderthals.*

**anthropologist**

A scientist who studies ancient humans and pre-humans

*Example: David Leakey was a famous anthropologist.*

**geneticist**

A scientist who studies various aspects of heredity and inheritance

*Example: Geneticists help with the understanding of fossil DNA.*