

WHAT IS AN ECOSYSTEM ?

A. Ecology

1. Definition
2. Ecological levels of organization:
 - a) organism
 - b) population
 - c) community
 - d) ecosystem
 - e) biosphere
 - 1) atmosphere (troposphere, stratosphere and ionosphere)
 - 2) hydrosphere
 - 3) lithosphere

B. Three principles of ecosystems

1. All life bound by 1st and 2nd Laws of Thermodynamics
2. Ecosystems are holocoenotic
3. Ecosystems governed by Laws of Limiting Factors:
 - a) law of the minimum
 - b) theory of tolerance

C. Ecosystem organization

1. Abiotic components
2. Biotic components: autotrophs (1^o producers)
heterotrophs (consumers – herbivores, carnivores, omnivores)
decomposers
3. Ecological succession: replacement of one biological community with another
 - a) climax community
 - b) 1^o succession
 - c) 2^o succession