

**Return of the wolves: Isle Royale National Park**  
**“Lessons from the wilderness”**  
 Glossary

Part 1	
Ecosystem	A community of living organisms and their nonliving environment, interacting in a system.
Community	All the organisms (living things) in an ecosystem.
Population	All the organisms of one species in an ecosystem.
Canids	A mammal of the dog family.
Genetic diversity	The range of different inherited traits in a species. More genetic diversity means populations are more likely to be able to adapt to changing conditions over time. Very small or isolated populations are more likely to have less genetic diversity over time.
Gene pool	The available genetic diversity in a population. Small or isolated populations tend to have smaller gene pools.
Canine parvovirus	A virus that causes intestinal symptoms and often death in canines. Many wolves on Isle Royale contracted parvovirus and died in the 1980s. It is believed the virus was introduced by a visiting pet. A vaccine exists to prevent parvovirus in dogs.
Boreal forest	Forests found in cold, northern climates; on Isle Royale, boreal forests include balsam fir, white spruce, and aspen.
Hardwood forest	Forests found in temperate areas and midlatitudes; on Isle Royale, hardwoods include sugar maples and yellow birch.
Abiotic factors	Nonliving parts of an ecosystem, such as air, water, soil, and sunlight.
Biotic factors	Living parts of an ecosystem, such as plants, animals, fungi, and microorganisms.
Predator	An organism that eats other organisms.
Prey	An organism that gets eaten by other organisms.
Apex predator	The predator at the top of the food chain; on Isle Royale, wolves are

	the apex predator.
Herbivore	An animal that eats plants.
Forage	Plant material eaten by grazing animals. Moose forage includes aspen, balsam fir, and aquatic plants.
Carrying capacity	The average population size that can be sustained in a particular habitat.
Limiting factors	Factors such as resource availability, competition, and predators that limit a population's growth.
Part 2	
Food chain	A series of transfers of energy between organisms in an ecosystem; all food chains start with a producer.
Food web	All the food chains in an ecosystem.
Deciduous trees	Trees that lose their leaves in the winter. On Isle Royale, some deciduous trees include Quaking Aspens, Sugar Maples, and Yellow Birch.
Conifer trees	Trees that reproduce with cones; most are not deciduous. On Isle Royale, conifers include Balsam Fir and White Spruce.
Plant community	All the plants in an ecosystem.
Biodiversity	The number of different species of living things in an ecosystem; generally, more biodiversity indicates a healthier ecosystem.
Part 3	
Ecotone	The boundary or edge between different ecosystems; Isle Royale is an ecotone between the southern hardwood forests and northern boreal forests.
Scat	Animal poop, collected by researchers to identify the animal, estimate populations, determine food sources and habitats, etc.
Climate change	Climate is the average weather of an area over a very long time. There is ample evidence that earth's climate has been warming in the past one hundred years, due to increased carbon dioxide levels in the

	atmosphere.
Island effect	The effect on the biodiversity of an island based on its isolation from mainland populations.
Trophic cascade	A phenomenon that occurs when a change in one species' population can indirectly and significantly affect an entire ecosystem.