

Return of the wolves: Isle Royale National Park

“Lessons from the wilderness”

Student Viewing Guide

Glossary

Part 1	
Ecosystem	A community of living organisms and their nonliving environment, interacting in a system
Hardwood forest	Forests found in temperate areas and midlatitudes; on Isle Royale, hardwoods include sugar maples and yellow birch
Boreal forest	Forests found in cold, northern climates; on Isle Royale, boreal forests include balsam fir, white spruce, and aspen
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
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.