



An **ecosystem** is made up of everything that is living in a particular area **interacting** with everything non-living in that area. Living things in an ecosystem include plants, animals, insects and microorganisms. Non-living things in an ecosystem include weather, earth, sun, soil, climate, and atmosphere. Everything in an ecosystem has its own role to play, and as long as it is not interfered with (for instance, by human beings) an ecosystem tends to remain in **balance**. If a “stranger” is introduced into an ecosystem, it can be disastrous. “Strangers” could include an animal or insect that doesn’t belong there, or a sudden and unexpected change in temperature. The “stranger” can throw off the natural balance of the interaction in the ecosystem. When this happens, the ecosystem can be damaged or destroyed.

Understanding Ecosystems

Look up the words in bold. Write a definition for each word on the line.

1. **ecosystem** _____

2. **interact** _____

3. **balance** _____

4. Look at the picture of the ecosystem at the top of the page. What living things in the picture is the frog **interacting** with?

5. Which of the following things do you think might throw this ecosystem off **balance**? Select all that apply. _____

- A. Humans treating the area with chemicals to control insects.
- B. Fish in the water.
- C. A severe drought that dries up the pond water.