

1. Environments

An *environment* refers to all of the living and nonliving things that surround an organism. It might be described as a home for a living thing. It includes both living things and nonliving things, such as air, soil, water, and temperature. The environment surrounds and affects an organism. Plants and animals can only survive in environments that meet their needs. A single object, such as a rock, is not an environment because it doesn't contain living and nonliving things, and it can't meet the needs of an organism. A meadow can be considered an environment because it has living things, such as mice, rabbits, deer, grass, shrubs, and other organisms, as well as nonliving things, such as ponds and air, that help meet the needs of the living things (see figure 1). The interactions between the living (biotic) and nonliving (abiotic) parts of an environment allow living things to survive and grow.



Photograph by Greg Thompson

Figure 1. An environment contains living (biotic) and nonliving (abiotic) parts. This meadow is an example of an environment. We can see living things, such as the deer, grass, and shrubs, as well as nonliving things, such as the water. Interactions between the biotic and abiotic parts of an environment help meet the needs of the living things that live there so they can survive and grow

