Evolution Vocabulary

organism - a life form (plants, animals, bacteria, fungi, etc.)

species - members of a group (life) that have similar characteristics that can breed to produce offspring that can then have offspring itself.

anatomical - (from anatomy) - the structure of an organism (bones, muscles, shells, wings, etc.)

common ancestor - the last ancestor that two or more organisms shared back in time.

Last Universal Common Ancestor (LUCA) - an early form of life that scientists believe all later life evolved from including us.

homologous structure - a body structure that is similar to a body structure in another species. These are often bones or organs. These structures came from common ancestors.

analogous structure - a body structure that is similar across species in structure and function but did not come from a common ancestor. A common example is wings in birds and insects.

vestigial structure - body structures that seem to have no purpose but may have at one time.

evolution - the process by which different organisms (animals, plants,etc.) are thought to have developed from earlier life forms.

extinct - no longer in existence. In this unit, we are using talking about a species of life.

extant - a species that is still in existence.

mass - a large number or quantity

prokaryote - a single-celled organism without a nucleus or other organelles. The first life on Earth. Ex: bacteria

eukaryote - an organism with a nucleus and membrane bound organelles. Can be single celled or multi-cellular. Everything except bacteria. Evolved about 2.0 billion years ago.