

4.3 Succession

Lesson Objectives

- Describe how population and species diversity changes as a result of ecological succession.
- Compare succession after a natural disturbance with succession after a human-caused disturbance.

Lesson Summary

Primary and Secondary Succession The series of predictable events and processes that occurs in a community over time is called ecological succession. Over the course of succession, the diversity of species usually increases. Primary succession begins in areas with no remnants of an older community. It occurs on bare rock surfaces where no soil exists. The first species to live in an area of primary succession are called pioneer species. Secondary succession occurs when a disturbance changes a community without completely destroying it.

Climax Communities A climax community is a mature, relatively stable ecosystem.

- ▶ Secondary succession in healthy ecosystems following natural disturbances often reproduces the original climax community.
- ▶ Ecosystems may or may not recover from extensive human-caused disturbances.

Primary and Secondary Succession

1. What is ecological succession?

2. What is primary succession?

3. When a disturbance changes a community without removing the soil, what type of succession follows?

4. Describe the process of succession in an ecosystem.

5. Why does secondary succession typically proceed faster than primary succession?
