

In any habitat you find living and **non-living** things. The living things are plants and animals. But what are the non-living things? Well, think about your own habitat. The water you drink is not alive. Neither is the air you breathe, nor the sunlight that makes you feel good. The materials that make your home are not alive. Neither are your clothes. Still, you need all these things in order to stay healthy and grow.

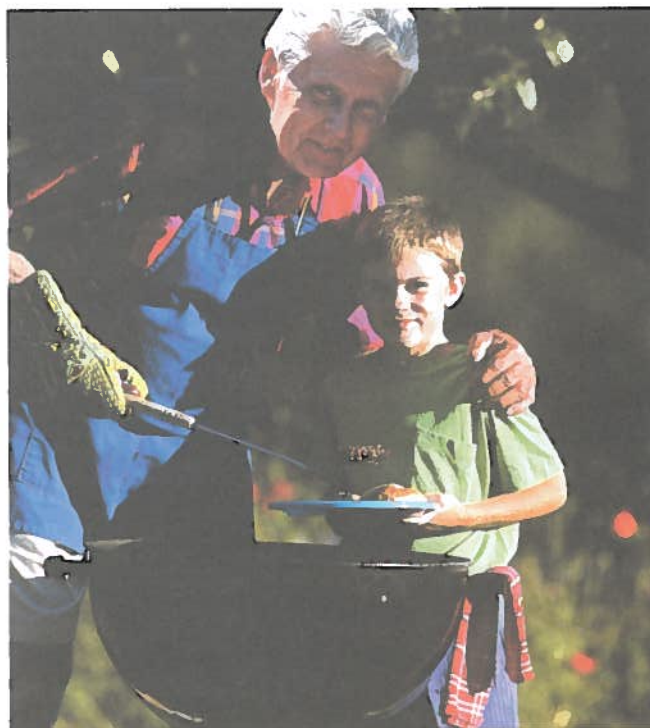
Plants and animals need non-living things just like you do. They need the right amount of food, air, light, warmth, water, and space. For example, if plants get enough sunlight, they continue to grow well. If a fish finds enough food, it grows bigger and has baby fish.

When changes happen to natural habitats, they affect plants and animals. For example, some seasons are drier than others. Animals and plants have a hard time getting the water they need. The weather in a habitat may be too cold, too hot, or too windy for some organisms. Instead of using a lot of energy to find very little food during the winter, some animals hibernate.



**Frogs hibernate**

An **ecosystem** is a living community and all its non-living parts. For example, snails, fish, insects, plants, and frogs live in a pond community. They all need the air, water, food, and the surroundings of their pond. Ecosystems are always changing. The temperature rises and falls. Sunlight grows brighter and dimmer. Sometimes there is enough food and at other times food is hard to find.



**Barbecue in summer.**



**Skiing in winter.**

Ecosystems carry on in spite of these changes. The reason is balance. Over time, there is enough of everything in the ecosystem: enough air, water, food, space, and shelter for all the living things that make up the community.