Keystone Species

*Define the following term* ***in your own words****:*

Keystone species:

*Directions: The following are a list of keystone species. Each situation describes the role of the keystone species in the environment. Describe what would happen if the keystone species was not present.*

1) Bees pollinate plants. This allows plants to survive and reproduce. The plants provide shelter for insects. Insects are eaten by other species such as birds.

Keystone species: Bees

What effect on the ecosystem would you expect to observe if the keystone species disappeared?

2) American Alligators use their tails to make burrows to stay warm. When they move locations, these burrows fill with water and are used for other species. As predators, they eat a variety of species including fish, turtles, birds, and deer.

Keystone species: Alligators

What effect on the ecosystem would you expect to observe if the keystone species disappeared?

3) Mussels are eaten by sea stars. Sea stars keep the number of mussels in check. Mussels have no other natural predators.

Keystone species: Sea Stars

What effect on the ecosystem would you expect to observe if the keystone species disappeared?

4) The population of dugongs and sea turtles may cause overgrazing of sea grass in Western Australia. Sea grass is where fish lay their eggs. Tiger sharks prey on sea turtles and dugogs.

Keystone species: Tiger Sharks

What effect on the ecosystem would you expect to observe if the keystone species disappeared?

5) Wolves are a top predator. Wolves keep deer populations in check and too many deer will eat small trees, which leads to fewer trees. Both birds and beavers depend on small trees for shelter.

Keystone species: Wolves

What effect on the ecosystem would you expect to observe if the keystone species disappeared?