

## NICHE

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Ecologists refer to the role of a species in relation to other species and its physical environment as its ecological niche. Niche can be thought as the unit of ecological existence just as the gene is the unit of heredity. The term niche was used firstly by Grinnell (1917, 1924, 1928). He viewed the niches as the functional role and position of an organism in its community. He considered niche essentially as a behavioural unit, although he emphasized it as the ultimate distributional unit (~~thereby~~ ~~thereby~~ including spatial features of the physical environment). Elton (1927) defined an animal's niche as "its place in the biotic environment, its relations to food and enemies" and as "the status of an organism in its community."

The most influential modern treatment of niche is of Hutchinson (1957). He used set theory which treats niche somewhat more formally and defines it as the total range of conditions under which the individual or populations lives and replaces itself. His examples for niche coordinates are nonbehavioural

and have thus emphasized the niche as a place in space rather than habitat or the "habitat niche" of ~~Allen~~ (1949). Odum (1959) defined the ecological niche as "the position or status of an organism within its community and ecosystem resulting from the organism's structural adaptation, physiological responses and specific behaviour (inherited and/or learned). He emphasized that "the ecological niche of an organism depends not only on where it lives, or where one would go to find it, is its habitat."

### Questions.

Q. Write short notes on habitat and niche.