

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Keystone Species: Guardians of Ecosystems

### Short Answer Key

1. Example: Sea otter - Role: Preys on sea urchins, preventing overgrazing of kelp forests.
2. Consequence: Removal of a keystone species can disrupt the balance of the ecosystem, leading to declines in biodiversity and changes in species interactions.
3. Keystone species are important for maintaining ecological balance by regulating the populations of other species and influencing ecosystem structure and function.
4. Wolves influence vegetation growth in Yellowstone National Park by indirectly affecting the distribution and behavior of elk through predation pressure.
5. Sea otters help regulate sea urchin populations in kelp forest ecosystems, preventing overgrazing of kelp and promoting the growth of diverse marine life.

