Dieback Encyclopedia Article

Dieback

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Dieback

Dieback refers to a rapid decrease in numbers experienced by a population of organisms that has temporarily exceeded, or *overshot*, its **carrying capacity**. Organisms at low trophic levels such as rodents or deer, as well as weed **species** of plants, experience dieback most often. Without pressure from predators or other limiting factors, such "opportunistic" species reproduce rapidly, consume food sources to depletion, and then experience a population crash due chiefly to starvation (though reproductive failure can also play a part in dieback). The presence of predators—for instance, foxes in a meadow inhabited by small rodents—often results in a stabilizing effect on population numbers.