**Forest** (forest biocenosis) - a vegetation complex specific to a given geographical continent, characterized by a large proportion of trees growing closely together, along with the animal world and various factors of inanimate nature, as well as the relationships and connections between them.

According to the definition by Prof. J.J. Karpiński, a forest or forest biocenosis is a dynamic natural entity, in which a specific vegetation dominated by woody forms, associated animals, and geological substrates, soil, water, and climate utilized by plants and animals are interconnected into an indivisible whole by a system of dependencies, relationships, and mutual influences.

In a legal sense (according to the Forest Act of 1991), a forest is land with a compact area of at least 0.10 hectares, covered with forest vegetation (forest crops) - trees and shrubs, as well as forest undergrowth - or temporarily devoid of it - intended for forest production or constituting a nature reserve or part of a national park or listed in the register of monuments (Art. 3 sec. 1 of the Forest Act).

Legally, forest also includes land associated with forestry, used for forestry purposes: buildings and structures, water management facilities, forest division lines, forest roads, areas under power lines, tree nurseries, timber storage areas, as well as areas used for forest parking and tourist facilities.

From the examples given, it can be inferred that defining a forest unambiguously is not an easy task because within its extensive range, it occurs in many different forms and manifestations. It is such a complex entity that attempts to establish its typical characteristics are quite risky and may lead to oversimplifications. Therefore, all views on the nature of the forest are subject to debate. The main basis for these discussions is the different perspectives of authors representing various scientific disciplines and dealing with the forest solely within the interdisciplinary possibilities of cognition. Therefore, a forest is defined differently by a phytogeographer, biologist, geographer, or zoologist. The forest undoubtedly belongs to a bioecological complex specific in terms of physiognomy, structural, environmental, and geographical aspects, as well as historically.

A natural forest is the most complex and durable terrestrial ecosystem. It is characterized by vertical layering, which is quite simple in coniferous forests (canopy layer, shrub layer, ground cover layer). The forest plays an important role in regulating water relations in a given area. Deforested areas often experience floods, while mountains may suffer from snow and mudslides. Most forests in Poland are of artificial origin, cultivated by humans.