

Shared Reading: Food Chains

In the living world, every form of life is food for another. Food chains show how energy and nutrients are passed between species. In a food chain, each species occupies a certain position in the chain.

Producers are always come first in a food chain because they make the food that supports the other species in the chain. Green plants are the most important producers. They use the sun's energy to make food by the process of photosynthesis. Grass is an example of a producer.

Consumers come next in the food chain. They are living things that cannot make food for themselves and have to depend on food that has been made by other living things. A food chain contains three kinds of consumers, herbivores, omnivores and carnivores. Herbivores are consumers that only eat plants. A rabbit is an example of a herbivore. Omnivores are consumers that eat both plants and animals. Coyotes are omnivores because they can eat both berries from plants and small animals. Carnivores are consumers that always eat other animals. A mountain lion is an example of carnivore that hunts animals for its food.

Decomposers are a vital part of food chains. They are always at the end of the food chain. Decomposers are the living things that feed on dead plants and animals and break them back down into fertile soil. Worms, fungi and bacteria are all examples of important decomposers in our ecosystems.

A community of living things may contain hundreds or even thousands of different species. Each species is usually involved in several different food chains. Therefore different food chains often interconnect to form a large network, called a food web. Even in a small ecosystem, such as a pond, food webs can be extremely complicated.

