

# FOOD WEBS

A **food chain** describes how energy and nutrients move through an ecosystem. It shows the order of what eats what. An example of a food chain in an Oregon forest is:

**green plant → caterpillar → deer mouse → owl**

A **food web** describes the complex network of food chains in an ecosystem.



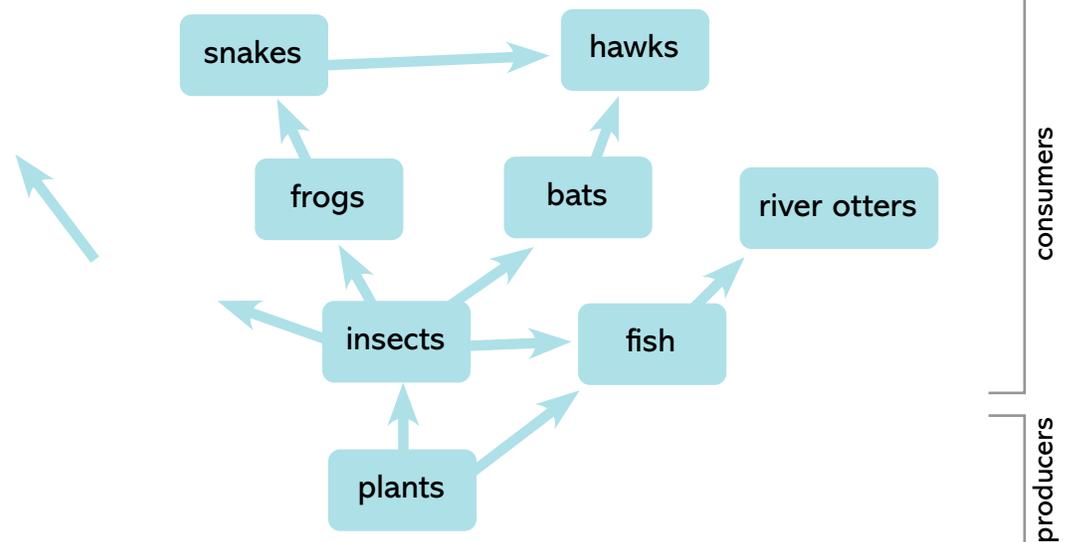
Oregon Forest Resources Institute

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Arrows in a food chain or food web show the flow of food energy from one living thing to the next. The arrows point to who is doing the eating.

## Engage

Complete a forest food web by filling in the missing parts. You may add animals from the above example or others you know.



## Explore

Go outside to look for different members of the food web in your backyard, schoolyard, neighborhood or nearby park. BE SURE TO CHECK WITH AN ADULT BEFORE HEADING OUT.

Find as many as you can of the following kinds of living things. Write the name or a description of each you find.

**Producers** – living things that can make their own food from sunlight:

**Consumers** – living things that eat other living things:

**Decomposers** – living things like insects or worms that eat dead things, and mushrooms (fungi) that break down dead things:

Safety note: Don't touch mushrooms or fungi unless you're familiar with them; some are poisonous.

## Explain

Create a food web of your backyard, schoolyard, neighborhood or nearby park.

1. At the bottom of a separate piece of paper, draw pictures of the different kinds of producers you observed.
2. Above the producer pictures, draw consumers you observed or that you think live there.
3. Above the consumers, draw the decomposers you observed or that you think live there.
4. Draw arrows to show the flow of energy through the ecosystem. Choose one picture and draw an arrow pointing from it to a living thing that could feed on it. If there are multiple living things that could feed on it, draw arrows to each of them.
5. Repeat step 4 for each of the living things on your paper.

## Elaborate

Research an animal that lives in Oregon forests, to find out what it eats and what eats it. Using the internet, type "What eats \_\_\_\_\_ (animal)?" and "What are \_\_\_\_\_(animal) predators?" into the search bar of your browser. You may also check out the animal profiles on [National Geographic's "Animal Pictures and Facts" site](#).

Possible animals include:

Bald eagle	Cougar	Northwestern salamander	Squirrel
Beaver	Coyote	Pileated woodpecker	Western toad
Black bear	Elk	Raccoon	White-tailed deer
Common garter snake	Gray wolf	Sockeye salmon	

Animal you researched:

What does it eat?

What eats it?

Write out a food chain or food web for this animal. Add arrows to show the flow of food energy.

## Evaluate

What might happen if a "link" in the food web for the animal you researched was missing?