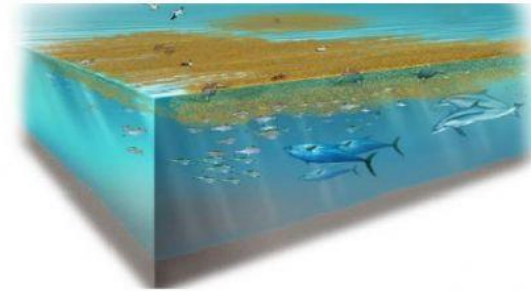


ECOSYSTEMS

ecosystem noun

a group of all organisms and their environment.

All these organisms and the part of the ocean they live in make up an *ecosystem*.



An ecosystem is a group of organisms and the habitat in which they live together. All organisms in an ecosystem interact with each other and their environment.

Some organisms interact as part of a food chain or food web

A food web is a complicated set of interrelated food chains all found in one ecosystem.

Matter and energy are transferred from one organism to another at each step. They

go through the producers like plants, which make their own food, consumers like animals, which eat other living things, and decomposers like bacteria, which break down dead organisms and help cycle energy and nutrients back into the environment.

For example, in the hot African Savannah, a herd of antelope gets energy from the grass they eat. A pride of lions chases down and consumes an antelope, gaining energy from the flesh of their prey. One of the lions is very old, and soon dies. Scavengers gain energy as they pick over his dead body. This is just one example of a string of events that is the food chain.

A parasite is an organism that lives on or in another, usually larger organism called a host. While the host may provide food or safety, it gets nothing in return from the parasite. Tapeworms or ringworms are parasites sometimes found in humans.

Unlike a parasitic relationship, a symbiotic relationship is between two organisms of different species in which one or both of the organisms may benefit or be neutrally affected. For example, the tiny bacteria in your stomach have a symbiotic relationship with you: You supply them with food, and they help break down your food and supply you with vitamins that your body can't produce on its own.

energy noun

the ability to do work, have power or produce change.

She needs a lot of *energy* to move those heavy buckets of water.



carnivore noun

an animal that eats meat.

Dogs are *carnivores*, which is why my dog loves it when my brother makes steak and feeds him the scraps.



herbivore noun

an animal that only eats plants.

A horse is an *herbivore*; it only eats plants.



food chain noun

a series of living things in which each uses the one below it as a food source.

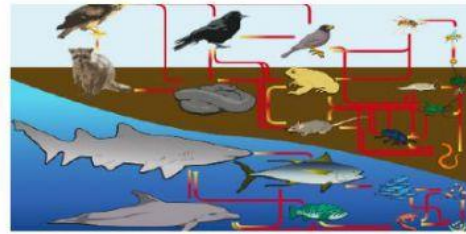
This *food chain* shows that bears eat salmon, and salmon eat smaller fish, which eat shrimp.



food web noun

all the interlocking food chains in a community.

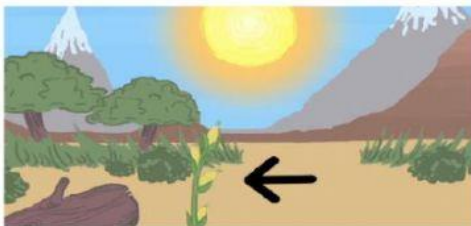
The food chains connected to form a *food web* like pieces of a puzzle.



producer noun

an organism that is able to make its own energy.

This plant is a *producer* because it makes its own energy from the sun.



decomposer noun

an organism that breaks down dead plant and animal cells into simpler substances for energy.

The mushroom, a *decomposer*, gets energy by breaking down dead leaves and wood.



scavenger noun

an animal or feeds on dead organisms.

A vulture is a *scavenger*; it only eats dead animals.



predator noun

an animal that eats other animals; the opposite of prey.

A lion may look cute, but it is a fierce *predator* that hunts other animals.

