

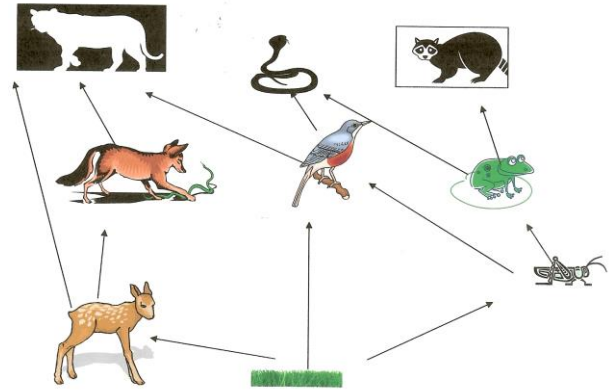
## Food Web Game

*This game can be found at the VN Center at Walden Ponds where other games are stored.*

This activity is designed to be used in the classroom to help students understand the food web, how species are all inter-connected, and how nature balances everything.

Introduce the idea of carnivore, herbivore, and omnivore and show examples of each. Have them think about people too. People are omnivores, but some choose to be vegetarians. However, we are equipped with certain tools that help us find and eat our food.

Introduce the concept of predator and prey, and that prey can also be a predator. Show skulls and point out different types of teeth and eye placement to help cement the idea of carnivore, herbivores, omnivores, predator, and prey.



### Procedure

- 1) There are six envelopes with a variety of photos of mammals, birds, and plants. Divide students into six small groups and give each group an envelope and a bundle of pipe cleaners.
- 2) Ask each group to spread their photos out and think about how the photos are connected in the food web. They can use the pipe cleaners to draw “lines” between the photos. Remind them that there is usually more than one connection between photos. (note: rodents eat antlers that have been shed to get calcium and other minerals. Nature recycles everything!)
- 3) Have them share what they come up with.
- 4) Ask how many groups have a mountain lion or a bear (only one each). Ask how many groups have a rabbit or a mouse (all of them). Why are there more rabbits and mice? Discuss how top predators are not in as much danger, live longer, and don’t need to have as many babies. Rabbits and mice are food to many other animals so nature needs more of them.
- 5) Now, remove one photo from each group. Take away a variety—for some groups, take the top predator. Others, take a prey animal.
- 6) Have the students rearrange their photos and their connections now that an item is missing. Ask them how it affected their food web.
- 7) Discuss how removing a species affects many others, and how each animal is important. (i.e. If a certain species of mouse goes extinct, it might not seem like that big of a deal, but it IS a big deal to the animal that eats it for lunch. If a top predator goes away, other animals become overpopulated.)

You can expand on this in lots of other ways. Use it as a helpful tool to put your lesson into photos and actions.