Connecting Kids to Nature

Engage children in learning about the environment and the world around them with this hands-on activity from Project Learning Tree® - it's fun and educational!

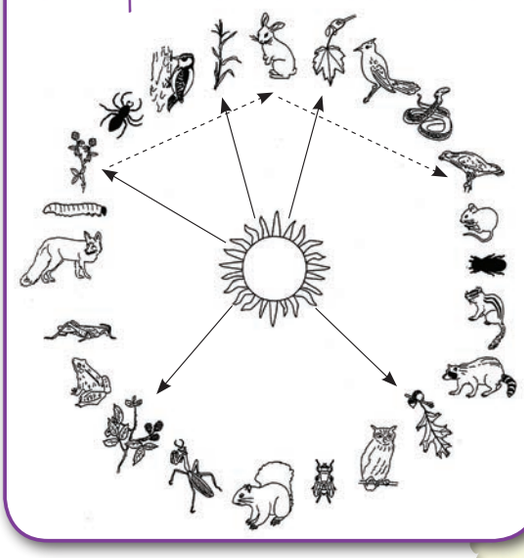
Web of Life

In this activity, children will learn about food webs, discovering the many ways that plants and animals of a forest ecosystem are connected.

A forest is a complex living system. While its appearance is often dominated by trees, a healthy forest is composed of many different animals and plants that interact with and depend on each other.

A ***food chain*** is a simplified way of showing energy relationships between plants and animals in an ecosystem. For example, a food chain of sun > plant seed > mouse > owl shows that a plant seed that grows from the sun's energy is eaten by a mouse, which in turn is eaten by an owl. However, in reality it is rare for an animal to eat only one type of food. A ***food web*** represents the interaction of many food chains in an ecosystem.

Example Forest Food Web



Invite children to think about the food web of a nearby wooded area. Ask:

1. What plants and animals might you find in a healthy forest ecosystem? (Be sure to include mammals, insects, birds, reptiles, trees, and other plants).
2. What might happen to the forest ecosystem if we remove an item from this list?
3. What might happen if humans are introduced to this ecosystem?

Have children visually depict a food web by drawing a woodland scene (hills, valleys, streams, trees, etc.) on sheets of cardboard or poster paper. Add photos or drawings of the organisms they came up with in Question 1. Place a push pin next to each plant or animal, and use yarn to connect the organisms to others with which they interact.

The diagram shows examples of organisms that depend on each other for food. Starting with the sun, can you connect the organisms into five different food chains to form a food web? One food chain has been completed for you. Hint: there are multiple combinations! When you have connected all the organisms you have created the food web!

PLT® Louisiana

Project Learning Tree® (PLT) is an initiative of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

Make Learning Fun!

For more activity ideas and materials:

- Attend a PLT workshop: www.plt.org/louisiana
- Contact your Louisiana PLT State Coordinator: Ricky Kilpatrick, rkilpatrick@agcenter.lsu.edu, 318-965-2326
- Visit shop.plt.org

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