

VIVID VIRGINIA

AFTER 1: Food Webs in the Forest

After your visit, students will synthesize the data and observations they made to develop an ecosystem. Your students explored the woodland in our Native Plant Trail to find producers, consumers, and decomposers. With this activity, students review and combine their discoveries to create a more complete food web with native organisms in a local ecosystem.

Standards Addressed: Science (2018) 3.4, 3.5; 4.3

Instructional Strategy:

1. Prepping for the activity: Since this activity is based on data collected by students, we recommend you review the student data sheets collected in the Native Plant Trail woodland to create a list of the organisms found during your Blandy visit. Create your own version of the food web based on the organisms, then look for missing links between producers, consumers, decomposers, the sun, etc. Make a list of these missing links to use if students need more guidance.
2. Prep: place large pieces of newsprint (or use large white boards) on tables. Each group of students should have one large surface and their respective data sheets from the Blandy field investigation.
3. Recap: Ask students to recall their field investigation in the Native Plant Trail. What did they investigate? Come to a classroom understanding of the organisms' roles in food chains that then compose a food web.
4. Explain that each group will review their data sheet and try to find connections between the organisms. After a few minutes, take the pulse. Ask: was anyone able to link any of their organisms together? If not, have an example prepared. Example, you saw caterpillars on a redbud tree and a bluebird in the canopy. Use your example and key vocabulary (the redbud is the primary producer, the caterpillar a primary consumer, and the bluebird a secondary consumer. If you can, note a decomposer in your chain.)
5. Either using your own or a student example, ask: is this example a food chain or a web? Explain your reasoning.
6. Is there anything missing from the chain or web? Explain your reasoning and ask class to brainstorm to as needed. Students may need to be guided to the concept that the sun is the driver of food webs on Earth.
7. Instruct students that their next step is to create a classroom food web. How this plays out in your classroom is up to you. You could place all the blank papers on the floor for students. You can use yarn to connect different organisms, students can create a diagram on a computer/tablet, students can fashion models for each organism (using crayons, paper, and other supplies of your choice), and so on.
8. End goal: Students realize the interconnections in a food web.