

SCIENCE EDUCATION

facilitator's notes

Food chains

What are the food chains?

All living things need food to give them the energy to grow and move. A food chain shows how each living thing gets its food. It shows who is eating who.

The sun is very important for all living things. Without the sun the plants would not grow and without plants there would be no animals.

Table Mountain supports many food chains.

The food chain consists of four main parts:

- The sun, which provides the energy for everything on the planet.
- Producers: these include all green plants, which use the energy of the sun to make their own food. They make up the bulk of the food chain.
- Consumers: In short, consumers are every organism that eats something else. They are divided into primary and secondary consumers.
- Decomposers: These are mainly bacteria and fungi that convert dead matter into gases such as carbon and nitrogen to be released back into the air, soil or water.

Do you know what a food web is?

A food web shows how food chains in an ecosystem overlap. Each plant or animal may be part of a different food chain. For example here on the mountain a grasshopper eats grass. So does a mouse. Then the mouse eats the grasshopper. Snakes again will eat the mouse.

How have humans affected the food chain?

When we spray pesticides, we put the food chain in danger. By breaking one link in the chain all of the organisms above that link are in threat of extinction. By hunting animals nearly to extinction, everything above the animal in the food chain is put in danger. Such a 'chain reaction' in the food chain can be perilous! Since the food chain provides energy that all living things must have in order to survive, it is of utmost importance that we protect it.

The table shows the relationship of each of the major groups in the

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| | Tertiary Consumers |
| | Primary Consumers |
| | Producers |
| | Decomposers |

