

DAY EIGHT

OVERVIEW OR SUMMARY OF LESSON



Day eight is devoted to studying the interdependent nature of ecosystems and food chains, which serves as an introduction to the Middle Rio Grande ecosystem which follows on days nine and ten. After discussing the concepts, students complete a worksheet which reinforces relevant vocabulary. Then they write about food chains in their journals.

PROCEDURES

1. Using Handout#13 "Ecosystems and Food Chains," discuss the concept of interdependency within ecosystems. Brainstorm examples of food chains. Handout #14 "Riparian Food Web" could be used as a transparency or as a handout to show how the chain works.
2. Introduce the food chain vocabulary found in Handout#13: ecosystem, biosphere, food chain, photosynthesis, producers, primary consumers, secondary consumers, tertiary consumers, herbivores, carnivores, omnivores and decomposers.
3. To reinforce the vocabulary and to apply the definitions to parts of the ecosystem, ask students (individually or in pairs) to complete the worksheet in Handout #15 "Food Chain Worksheet".
4. Have students write about food chains in their journals. They might want to make diagrams or draw pictures to show the relationship between producers and consumers. If students use the drawing found in Handout #16 as a journal entry, ask them to draw in omnivores and carnivores to illustrate other parts of the chain.
5. Give students the Crossword Puzzle (Handout#17) to do in class or as homework to review the vocabulary of the past 3 days.

ALTERNATIVE OR SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVITY

Take your class to visit an ecosystem near your community. Ask each student to select a small area, and to list all living and nonliving things they observe there. Compare the lists and discuss the items in terms of interdependent connections. Then have them return to their small areas and see how many observations they can make with their eyes closed -- depending only on their senses of hearing, touch and smell. (Of course make sure there are no harmful plants or creatures in the area before you attempt this!) After writing these things down, again have the class compare their lists: how do these things, observed through hearing, smell and touch, relate to their original lists, and to the observations of other students? Finally, ask students to look for evidence of other animals in the area -- by noting broken branches, prints, animal and bird droppings, etc. Can they figure out what creatures made these marks? And how does each of these creatures fit into the web of interdependence?