

NOVEMBER 15-30, 2018 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

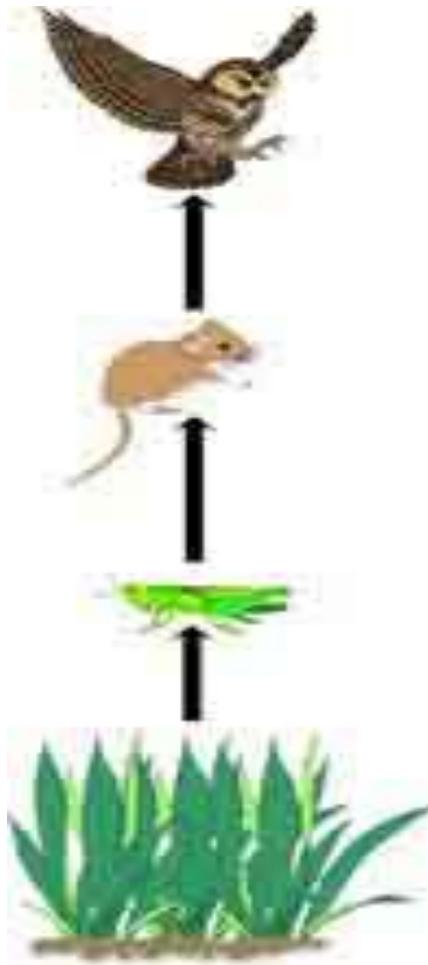
By Dick Harlow

FOOD CHAINS-FOOD WEBS

If you drive a car, did you notice that your windshield this summer was not completely covered with splats of insect bodies? Anyone at EastView, I'm sure, can remember twenty to thirty years ago at how dirty a car windshield got from insects hitting it. Could it be that we have fewer insects around? Could the lack of apparent insects be a reason why few insect eating birds are being seen each summer? Any animal requires food to survive. Lack of food requires that the animal leave that area, or it will meet its demise.

Humans seem to have a propensity to control nature, to dominate the landscape where they live. If we are to survive on this planet, i.e. have a chance with the projected increase in land and water temperature and sea level rise, we need to have an appreciation for and an understanding of the natural world, the natural system without human interference.

I don't believe we can blame fewer insects each spring, summer and fall on climate change. I do believe we can blame it on our insatiable desire to be free of pesky flies, biting insects and the pugnacious yellowjackets that come around our picnic tables. Eliminating these pests along with mosquitoes and other nuisance insects makes our lives more enjoyable. And, this doesn't even consider the agricultural problem of crop eating insects which represents monetary loss.



Simple Food Chain, © Sciencebob

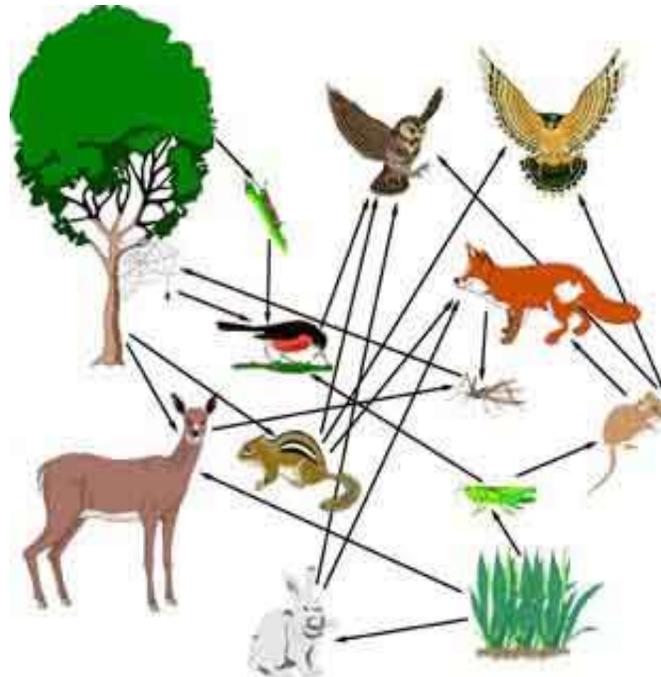
Where there is a need someone will form a company, corporation or business to fulfill that demand. The chemical industry was built for ways to fill the demands by farmers, homeowners, towns, cities and agriculture.

I am not sure, but I'm almost certain, that most people ignore the wildlife food chain when bugs are eating up their garden vegetables, foliage, flowers, etc. I'm sure people aren't looking to share their homes or apartments with rodents or bugs, as well as allowing certain bugs to defoliate their lawn or garden plants. As a species we spent long enough (from the beginning of the human race to the present) having to share space with all other forms of life. I think many people want that space to themselves. Reasonable, until it is pointed out that we and nature are all interdependent.

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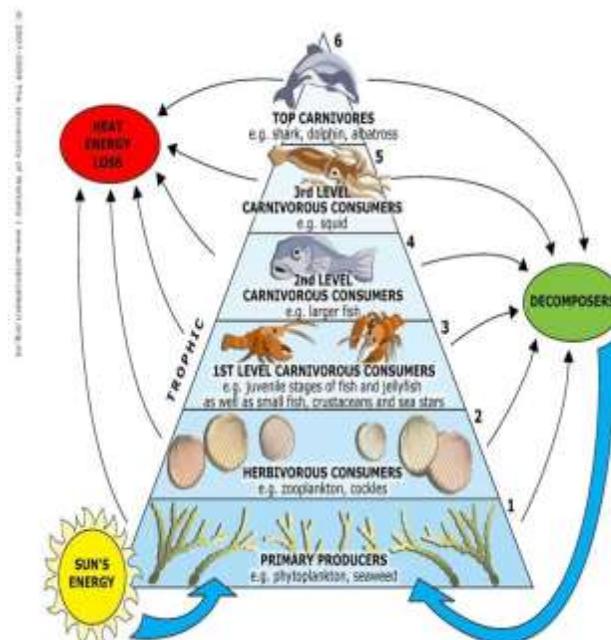
A simple food chain, previous diagram, goes from soil to plant to herbivore (plant eating) to first order consumer (those that eat plant eaters) to 2nd order consumer (those that eat 1st order consumers) to those that eat 2nd order consumer called 3rd order consumer. This simple food chain can get very complex, much like all the links of a large spider's web, the result being called a food web.



Several food chains make up a Food Web.
© Sciencebob

What happens when we interrupt or break a link in that food chain? Dependent upon what organism we are talking about, it can cause a minor or a major disruption in an organism's way of life, in other words its survival. For example, if you remove a 1st order consumer that a 2nd order consumer depends on for survival, you would cause that 2nd order consumer's population to drastically diminish, to eventually become extinct, or it would have to move to another food source. Whether that new food source could cause that consumer to maintain its population is another story.

It really doesn't make any difference whether we are talking about a land-based food chain or freshwater or saltwater food web, the same analogy is true. Evolution has determined that organisms depend on each other for survival. Yes, vegetarians eat plants, predators and carnivores eat meat, humans eat plants and meat. We depend on them and they depend on us for mutual survival.



Near shore saltwater food web © Sciencebob

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Another case in point: A coral reef community is a mix of plant and various consumers that depend on the existence of all who make up the community. The bleaching of coral due to excessive high-water temperatures caused by warming oceans, destroys these communities. Can you see a force that is affecting this underwater community? If you have ever snorkeled or scuba dive over a coral community, you know the essence of vibrancy and beauty that exists below you. You also know there is little to no life around dead coral. This is happening to the Great Barrier Reef off Australia's east coast.

Life, all life, can withstand a great deal within the realm of nature, weather, and even some of man's toxins. I'm not sure it can withstand these toxins - chemical, radiation, and plastic substitutes, when they overtake the food web. The dormant levels of toxins that stay in the soil, in the body of insects or mice or voles, and are fed upon by birds and carnivores as well as scavengers who feed on dead and decaying flesh, cause irreparable harm. Slow acting poisons or toxins in the ground and water can weave their way into the food web rather quickly. Unfortunately, these poisons are here to stay.

Just providing some food for thought, with the hope that scientists will continue to discover new technology to environmentally remediate the problem.

OBSERVATIONS

MAMMALS

Gray Squirrel
Weasel, first for EastView!
Meadow Vole

Weather Tidbits

Month of NOVEMBER 1-30, 2018

[All Measurements taken at solar noon \(1230 EST\).](#)

PRECIPITATION

Total Precipitation: 144.8 mm or 5.7 inches for the month. 1.9 inches above normal.

Overcast Days: 15