Wild Wetlands: Web of Life Game!

Supplies needed: Large ball of string or yarn, the various picture cards of ecosystem components, animals, plants, and microorganisms cut out. Each student will pick a card and become that component!

How to play:

Everyone will sit in a circle to represent the ecosystem. Start with some simple **food chains**. For example: The sun holds onto the end of the string and asks who needs me? cattails! The ball is rolled over to the cattails person. Who eats cattails? Muskrat! The ball is rolled over to the muskrat person. Who eats muskrat? Bobcat! The ball gets rolled over to the bobcat person. Each person that the ball was rolled to holds onto the string as it gets rolled to the next person; that way by the end of it, a good visualization of a food chain will be achieved! Try a couple of times with different kinds of food chains.

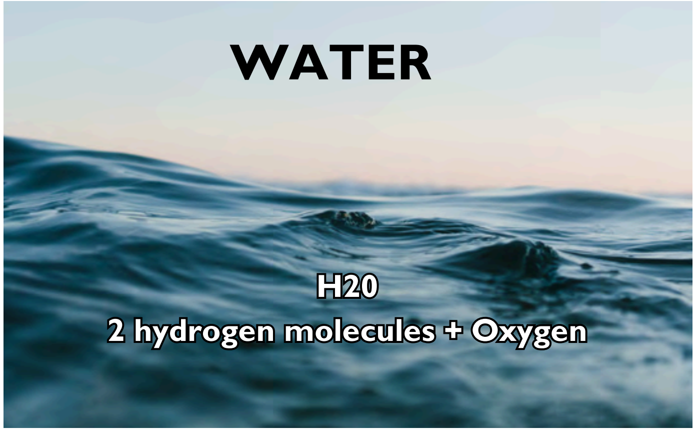
Making a food web: Start with a component, then pass the ball to a related component. It could be that the first component eats the second component, like: woodrat connected to cordgrass. Or could be a relationship where the first component needs the second in order to survive like: clover needs dirt.

Now, connect second components with third components. (wood rat is eaten by garter snake, hawk, fox, or bobcat. Red clover needs dirt, earth worms, fungi, and bacteria) Continue doing this until several people are connected in different ways. Discuss what these connections and relationships are as you go along. Discuss interdependence, how every component of the ecosystem is connected.

Challenge: Once everyone is connected in the ecosystem, remove a component from the web. Scenario example: someone drained the wetland to make farmland, and now there is no water! Have the water person shake their strings so that everyone connected to water can feel the impact. All components that feel the shake should shake their strings as well. Discuss how different components of the ecosystem are affected when another component is removed from the web!

Other possible scenarios: What happens if a chemical spill poisons the soil, all the decomposers and plants die, what happens to the animals that eat plants? What if the water became badly polluted? Some other dangers to wetlands are: dredging, filling, draining, pollution, invasive species and sea level rise.

wildcare
76 Albert Park Lane, San Rafael, CA, 94910

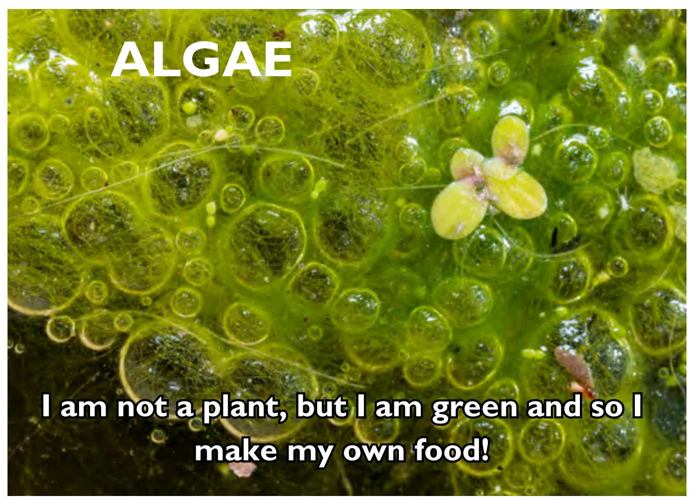

WATER
H20
2 hydrogen molecules + Oxygen


DIRT
Needs fungi and bacteria to keep it delicious and nutritious for plants.


Makes delicious seeds!
CORD GRASS


CATTAILS
Like other wetland plants, they keep our water clean!


SUN


ALGAE
I am not a plant, but I am green and so I make my own food!


They are scavengers that love detritus, algae, and whatever else they can find!
RAM'S HORN SNAIL


MUSKRAT
Herbivore


Carnivore
RED TAILED HAWK

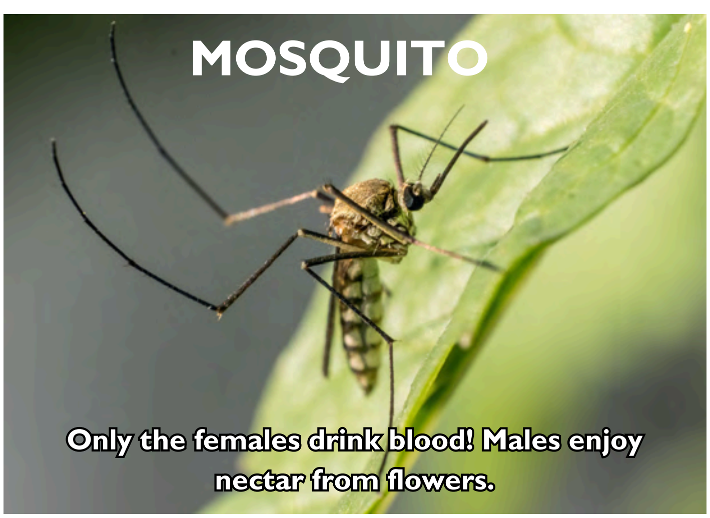

AIR


WESTERN POND TURTLE
Omnivore


Decomposer/Omnivore
I love to eat algae, bacteria, and dead things, like detritus!
AMPHIPOD

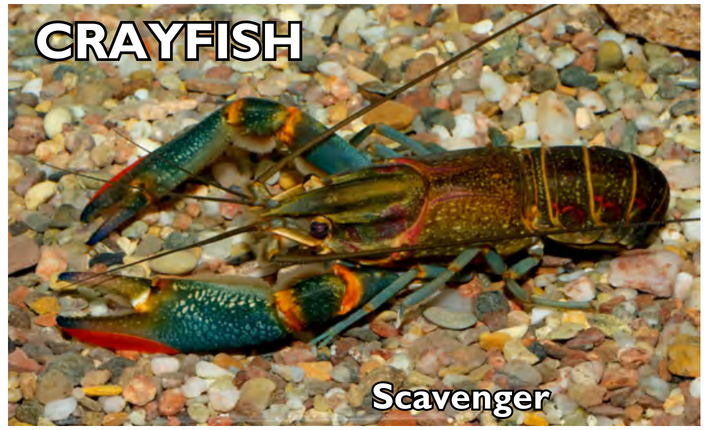

DETRITUS
Waste and debris from plants, animals and the environment! YUM!


RED LEGGED FROG
Omnivore

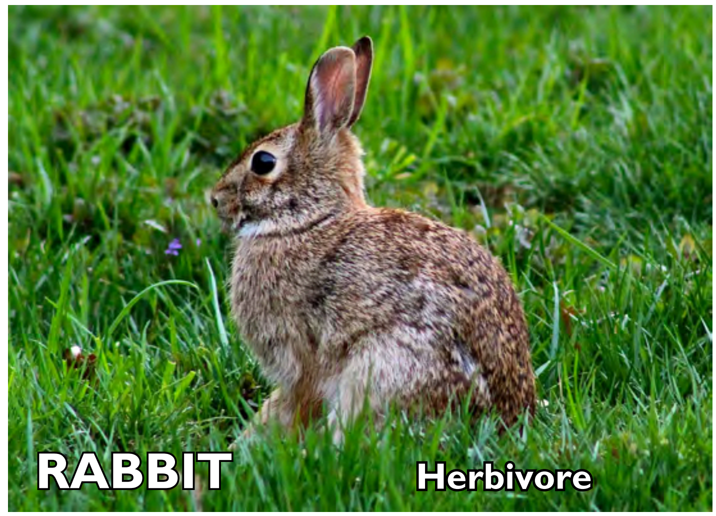

MOSQUITO
Only the females drink blood! Males enjoy nectar from flowers.


TULE PERCH
Omnivores that love invertebrates like zooplankton and amphipods! mmm...


MALLARD
Omnivore


CRAYFISH
Scavenger


Plants make their own food from sunlight!
RED CLOVER


RABBIT
Herbivore

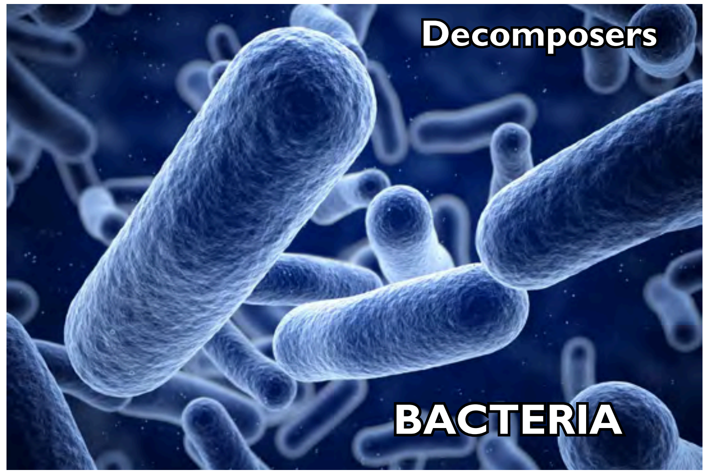
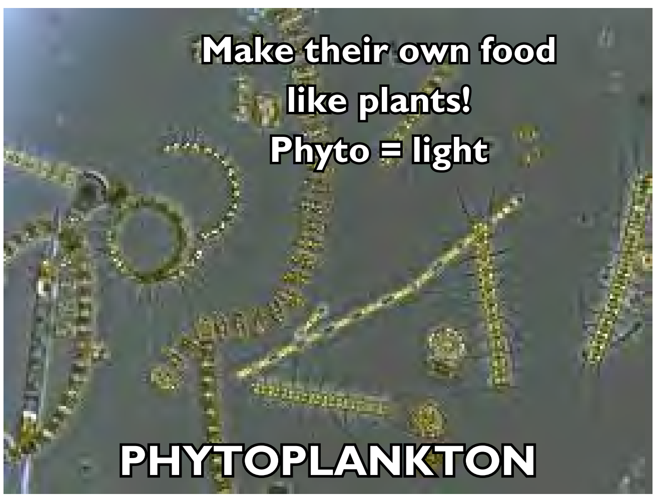

RACCOON
Omnivore

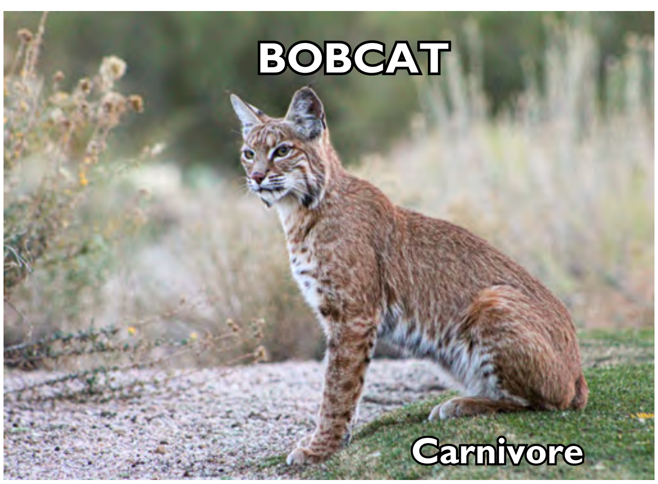

STRIPED SKUNK
Omnivore


DUSKY FOOTED WOOD RAT
A vegetarian that loves fruits and fungi too.


Eat phytoplankton!
Zoo = animal
plankton = drifter
ZOOPLANKTON

Decomposers love
detritus!
EARTH WORM

Decomposers
FUNGI

Decomposers
BACTERIA

Make their own food
like plants!
Phyto = light
PHYTOPLANKTON

Carnivore or
insectivore
GARTER SNAKE

BOBCAT
Carnivore

GREY FOX
Omnivore