

Understanding Food Chains

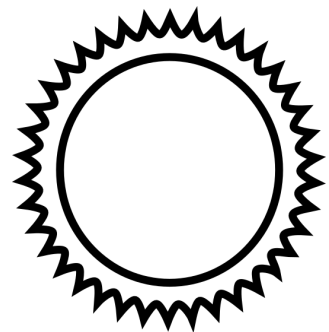
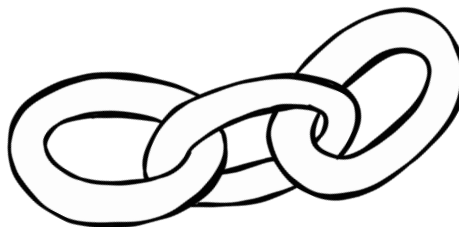
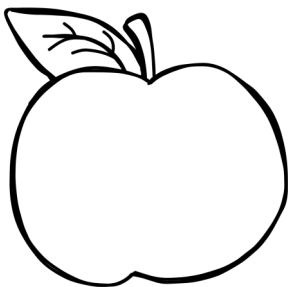
Our bodies need energy to grow and do things. We get energy from the food we eat. But where does our food get energy from? That's where the **food chain** comes in. Before we can understand what a food chain is, we have one more word we have to learn. **Ecosystem**.

Ecosystem

An ecosystem is made up of all the living and nonliving things in an area. A desert includes sunshine, cacti, scorpions, lizards, reptiles, and other plants and animals that live there. When we look at how all of those things work together and affect each other, we are studying an ecosystem.

A food chain is the way energy moves through an ecosystem. The food we eat got all of its energy from the sun, but we don't eat sunshine! The energy comes to us one step at a time, like links in a chain. At one end of the chain is the sun. At the other end of the chain is us and the food we eat.

Some food chains are made up of just the sun and plants. The sun gives an apple tree energy to grow, the tree produces apples, and we eat the apples. There aren't any animals involved. Some food chains involve animals. When one animal eats another animal, it is called a predator. When an animal is eaten, it is called prey. Let's look at some of the different food chains we can find all around the world.



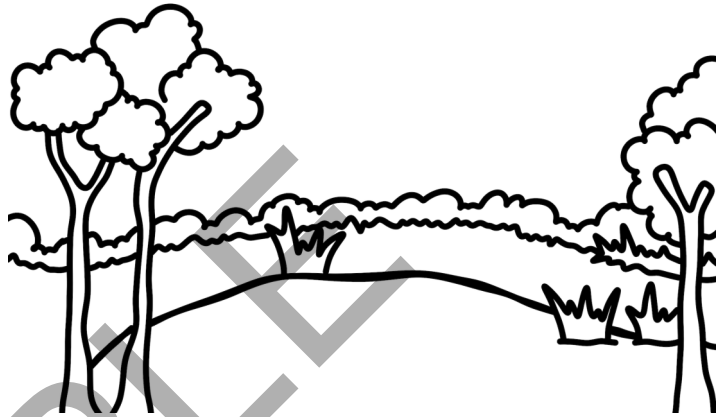
Food chain

AUSTRALIAN WOODLANDS

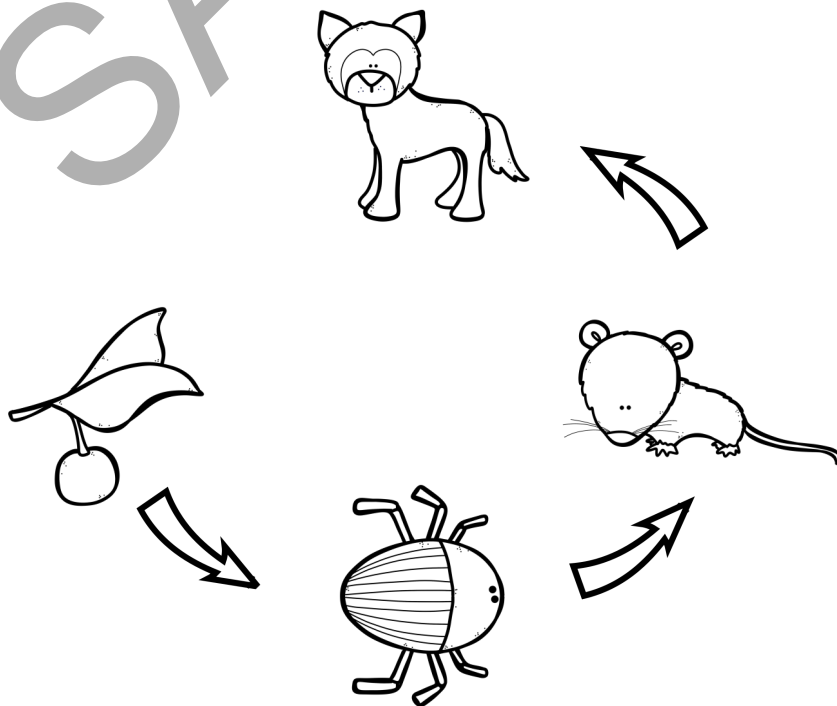
Australia is a country and a continent south of the Equator. It is surrounded by the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Its **woodland** areas are covered with trees and grass.

Beetles eat plants that got their energy from the sun. Small marsupials called possums are predators and eat the beetles and other insects. Wild dogs called dingoes are predators, and they eat the possums. The possum was a predator when it ate the beetle, but then it became prey for the dingo.

Add the sun and an arrow to complete this food chain.



Australian
woodlands

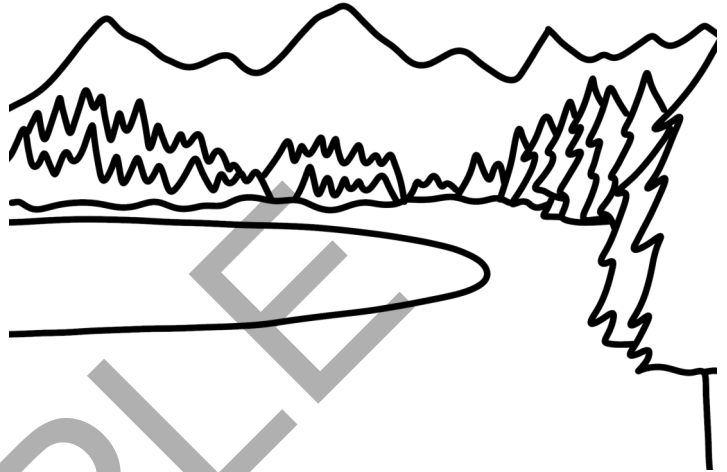


BOREAL FOREST

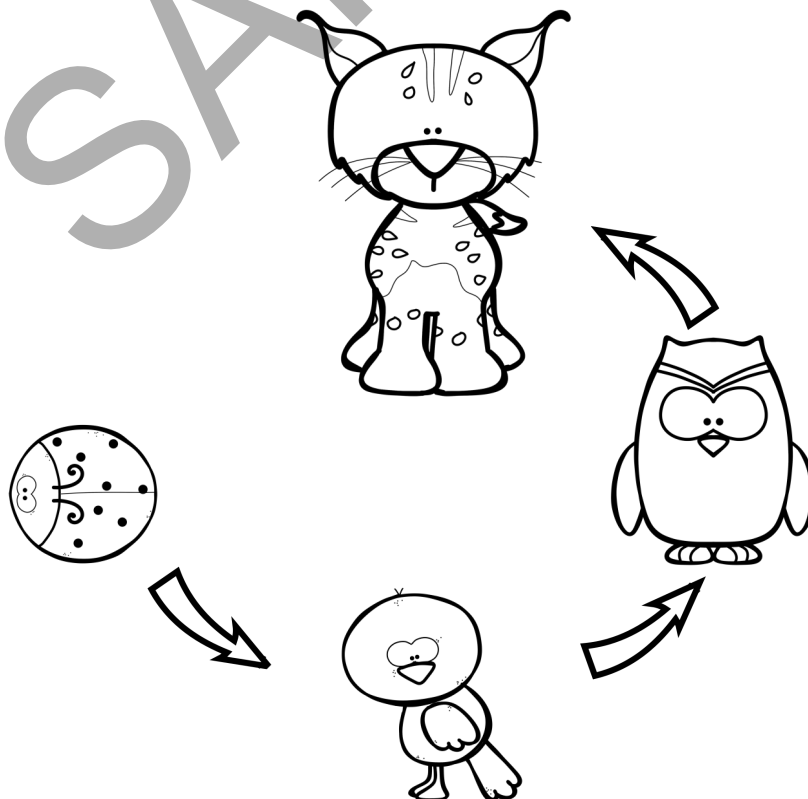
The **boreal forest**, or taiga as it is sometimes called, is an evergreen forest that sits like a giant hat on the Northern Hemisphere. It covers part of Canada in North America and part of Scandinavia in Europe and Russia.

Aphids are tiny bugs that eat plants. Ladybugs eat small bugs like aphids for energy. Songbirds eat the ladybugs. Great horned owls sometimes eat the songbirds, and the lynx eats the owls. The ladybugs, songbirds, and owls are both predators and prey.

Add the sun, plants, aphids (just tiny little dots), and arrows to complete this food chain.



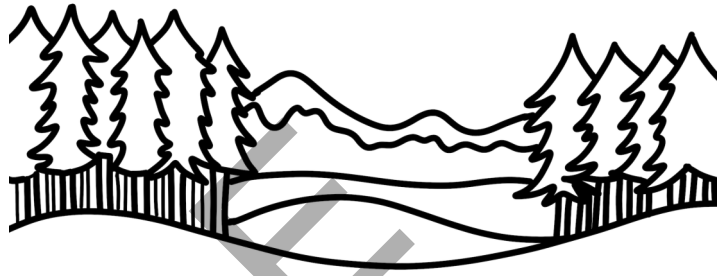
Boreal
forest



CONIFEROUS FOREST

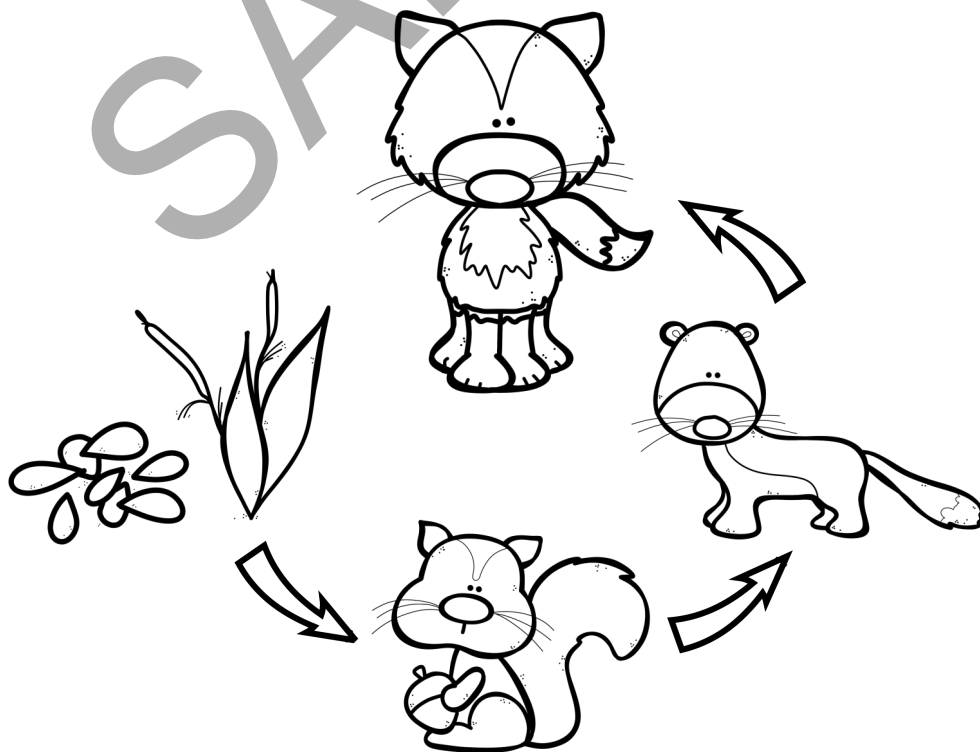
Temperate **coniferous forests** are evergreen forests that are not as far north as the taiga.

Squirrels eat the seeds plants produce. Weasels eat squirrels, and foxes eat weasels. The weasels are predators because they eat squirrels, but they are also prey because the foxes eat them.



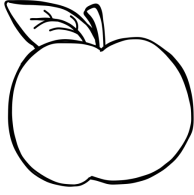
Add the sun and an arrow to complete this food chain.

coniferous
forest

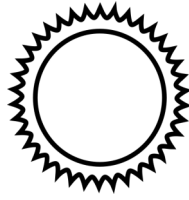


Review

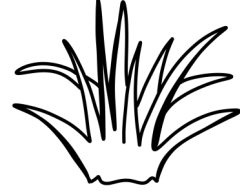
What is the first thing in every food chain? Draw a circle around it.



Apple



Sun



Grass

In the food chains we studied, which animal was not at the top of its food chain? Draw an X through it.



Frog

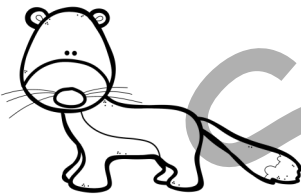


Mountain lion

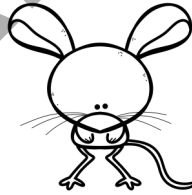


Hawk

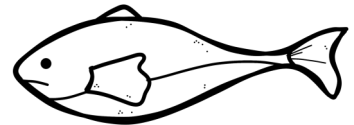
Which animal eats copepods? Draw a circle around it.



Weasel

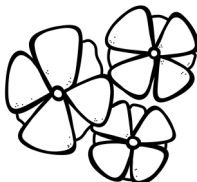


Jerboa

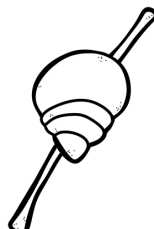


Arctic cod

Which of the following does not get its energy directly from the sun? Draw an X through it.



Flowers



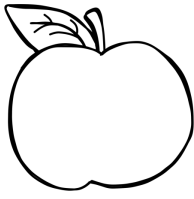
Snail



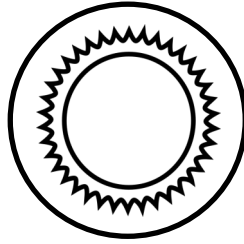
Algae

Review Answer Key

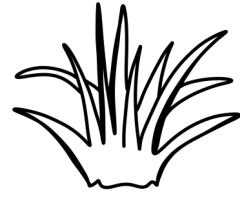
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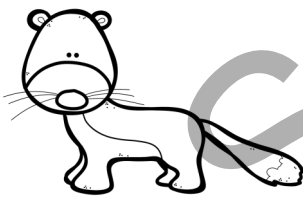


Mountain lion

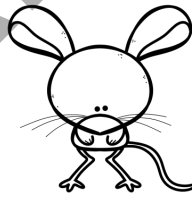


Hawk

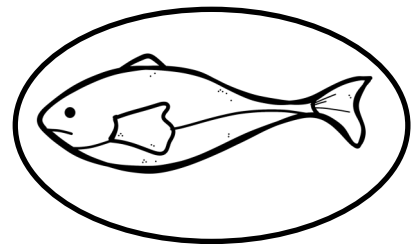
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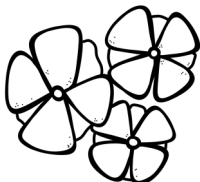


Jerboa



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