

PREDATORS AND PREY

No animal or plant lives alone: each one is linked to dozens of other organisms in what we call the web of life. Plants and animals have been on the Earth for a very long time. A few animals, such as foxes, have adapted to the modern world by scavenging in our rubbish bins for scraps of food. However, animals don't go to the supermarket to buy their food. So where do they go?

Some animals such as an eagle or an otter hunt other smaller animals to eat. These are called carnivores as they are flesh-eating animals. Some animals, such as deer, eat only but plants – these are called herbivores. Small animals such as tiny animals found in the soil and water feed on rotting or decaying materials – they are called detritivores. A worm is large detritivore. Some animals eat a combination of plants and animals – they are called omnivores – a badger is a good example as it eats worms and beetles as well as plants. Some animals that are very big do not get eaten at all, but die of illness or old age – examples include eagles, bears, tigers and elephants.

An animal that eats other animals is called the **predator** and an animal that is eaten is called the **prey**. The link between animals through food is called a **food chain** and it is possible to see the links between animals by looking at these relationships. In terms of numbers of animals there are more prey than predators. This makes sense if you think about it. If it was the other way around then the predators would die of hunger as they would run out of prey to eat. A food chain starts with a plant and ends with a flesh-eating mammal or bird. The chain represents the transfer of energy originally trapped by plants from the sun. The chain is very rarely more than four or five steps.

Fill in the Food Chains:

Below are two general examples. Use them, together with information in the species factfiles to help complete the chains in the six other examples. Answers below.

Example 1: plant ← aphid ← spider ← bird ← bird of prey ← mammal

Example 2: roseplant ← greenfly ← blue tit ← cat/hawk

- _____ ← butterfly ← bird ← cat
- lettuce ← caterpillar ← bird ← _____
- heatherplant ← _____ ← spider ← sand lizard ← kestrel
- _____ ← dormouse ← barn owl ← hawk
- lettuce ← _____ ← thrush ← hawk
- _____ ← bee ← bird ← hawk