

YOUNG EXPLORERS

Wetland Food Web

Put on your boots or sneakers, grab an adult, and head to the nearest pond, stream, lake, river, swamp, or marsh. Look closely and you'll discover a diverse community of plants and animals connected in what is known as a food web. Food webs are made up of lots of food chains. Here is an example of a simple food chain:

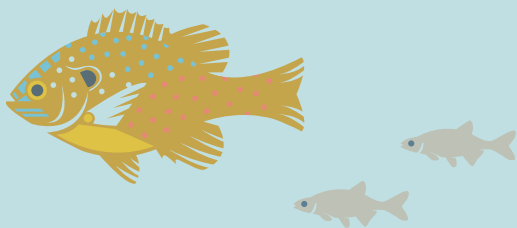
Plant → Snail → Fish → Bird

Food chains and food webs show how energy moves from one animal to another in the form of food. So, who is eating whom in this food web? Read about the role each of these wetland species plays in the food web and then visit massaudubon.org/youngexplorers to download an activity and coloring page to draw your own food web connections.

Raccoons: These resourceful mammals eat a mix of plants and animals, including fruits, fish, frogs, insects, and eggs from turtles and birds. Sometimes, certain "birds of prey" like hawks will eat raccoons.



Fish: Pond fish feast on insects, tadpoles, frogs, snails, and slugs, as well as aquatic plants. Lots of predators eat fish, including herons, raccoons, otters, turtles, bullfrogs, and snakes.



Birds: If there's water, there are birds—hungry ones looking to feast on fish, frogs, turtle eggs, insects, or even other birds, depending on the species.



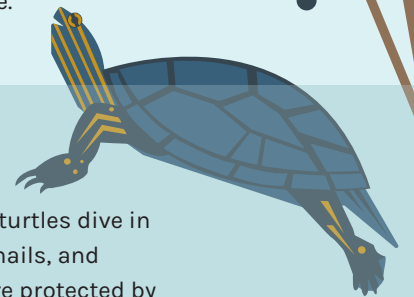
Dragonflies: These acrobatic insects have a taste for mosquitoes and other flying insects and they taste great to birds, frogs, and even other dragonflies!

Aquatic plants: The sun provides energy for cattails, lily pads, and other aquatic plants, which then pass their energy along to the animals that eat them.

Frogs: In their early days as tadpoles, these amphibians hang out in sunny pools of water, eating plants and insects and providing a meal to birds like herons and crows. Once fully grown, frogs eat insects that they catch with their long, sticky tongues, along with slugs, snails, and worms. And they're still a tasty treat for herons and fish, as well as raccoons and other mammals looking for food at the water's edge.



Turtles: When hunger strikes, turtles dive in to search for insects, small fish, snails, and underwater plants. Adult turtles are protected by their hard shells, but turtle eggs and young hatchlings are often eaten by foxes, skunks, raccoons, herons, bullfrogs, and larger turtles.



Beetles: These aquatic insects skim the surface or dive deep to dine on plants or smaller aquatic swimmers including other insects, all while trying to avoid being eaten by dragonflies, tadpoles, and frogs.

