Name _____ Class _____

Food chain stories

Draw each of the food chains described in the stories in diagrammatic form, using arrows.

NOTE: The concept of energy flow through an ecosystem is very important in ecology. The rather abstract idea of pyramids of numbers and biomass can be difficult for students, but it does graphically illustrate the inefficiency of energy flow along a food chain.

1. A blade of grass in a swamp is eaten by a small insect. The insect flies about the swamp and is seized by a dragonfly. The dragonfly is seized and eaten by a green frog. The frog jumps onto land around the swamp and is spied by a snake. The snake slides forward and grabs the frog. However, the snake slithers into an open area and is seen by a hawk which swoops and grabs the snake in its teeth. It flies to its nest and shares the snake with its young.

2. The grand eucalypt stands tall in the forest. Seed-harvesting ants take the seeds that fall to the ground, and crickets eat the bark. The Leadbeater possum spies the crickets and catches them while they are still in the bark. Unfortunately cats have become feral in the forest and one pounces on the Leadbeater possum. Skinks feed on the ants but are not quick enough for the sharp-eyed kookaburra which swoops eagerly for a meal.

3. Around the Murray River live the long-necked tortoises. The adults feed directly on tadpoles. After the adults have laid eggs and they have hatched, the babies are often snatched by snakes. While swimming in the river, leeches often attach themselves to the tortoises and suck their blood, although they do not kill them.

4. The rock shore near Barwon Heads is full of interesting marine life. There is an abundance of seaweed (algae) which lives off decaying material in the water. Lug worms also eat this detritus. We can see lots of periwinkles on the rocks. These feed off the seaweed as does the multitude of prawns. Crabs eat the lugworms, periwinkles and prawns. While swimming around, gulls spy the crabs and swoop to feed on these.