

Adders are Amazing! Gwiberod Gwych!

5. FOOD CHAINS AND WEBS

INTRODUCTION

An important part of science curriculum work in primary schools is the concept of food chains and at a more advanced stage, food webs. This activity is a lot of fun and teaches children how animals interact with their environment and each other, and how any changes can affect them all. You need a collection of toy or model animals representing native wildlife – they need not look realistic. If working with a school class, a selection of 30 toys is ideal but smaller numbers are fine for group work. Include snakes, their prey items and predators.

MATERIALS:

- Between 10-30 toy animals and plants, representing our native British wildlife e.g. flowers, insects, small mammals, larger mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians
- Printed and laminated arrows to represent 'who eats whom' and trophic energy flow through the food chain or web (template in 'resources' section)

DO IT!

- 1** Print out, photocopy or draw a set of around 20-30 large arrows on paper or card. Ideally, laminate them for durability.
- 2** Gather together your toys in the area you'll be working in. A school playing field or outdoor area in a park or nature reserve works well.



DO IT!

3 Give a few of the older children or adults the task of putting the animals out around the grounds. Ask them to place them in places you would normally expect to find them e.g. birds in trees/bushes, snakes and small mammals at ground level at the edge of vegetation).



4 Ask the children (who will be super excited by now) to go and find an animal – ONE EACH or one for their group. Ask them to remember where they found it e.g. at the edge of the bush, in a tree.



5 Ask the children where they found the animals, and then discuss how they think the animals would live in this environment. Then ask them to work out what their animal would eat, what would eat it, and find other children with their prey or predators. Plants are also a good discussion point – introduce photosynthesis turning sunshine into plant sugars



6 Get the children to create simple food chains or for older children, add in branches to create food webs to see how the animals and plants interact with each other in the natural environment.

Then try to model different scenarios – what if lots of pheasants are released, or the hedge is cut down or the insects die. What happens to the snakes? And what effect does that have on the web? Discuss!

