

Students go on a scavenger hunt for local producers, consumers, and decomposers and then think about actions we can take to help keep them – and ecosystems – healthy.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

- Explain the roles of producers, consumers, and decomposers in an ecosystem
- Classify living organisms as producers, consumers, and decomposers
- Identify actions that can be taken to support living organisms in an ecosystem

DURING THIS ACTIVITY, STUDENTS WILL:

- Investigate their surroundings
- Identify examples of producers, consumers, and decomposers
- Discuss ways our actions can help organisms in an ecosystem

MATERIALS:

- **Scavenger Hunt Sheet**
- Pencils
- Clipboards (Optional)
- Magnifying glasses (Optional)

**GRADE LEVEL: K-6****SCAVENGER HUNT SHEET**

Set up

- ☐ **Decide how to split up students (pairs, small groups)**
- ☐ **Prepare Scavenger Hunt Sheets (1 per group of students)**
- ☐ **Determine the boundaries for the outdoor part of the activity**

Instructions

1. Ask students where living beings get their food from. Lead the conversation by starting with animals, then asking about plants, and then earthworms or mushrooms. Talk about the different roles living things have in an ecosystem (producers, consumers or decomposers).

Continue the discussion:

- What are some examples of producers? (*plants, trees, flowers*)
- What are some examples of consumers? (*mammals, birds, insects*)
- What are some examples of decomposers? (*worms, termites, mushrooms*)

2. Explain that you are going to go on a scavenger hunt to find producers, consumers and decomposers. Separate students into pairs or small groups and distribute the Scavenger Hunt Sheet. Go through the sheet and answer any questions. Before heading outside, explain the boundaries of the activity and how long they will have. Once the scavenger hunt is over, return inside.

ECOSYSTEMS EXPLAINED TO STUDENTS

An ecosystem is like a big neighbourhood where all living things interact with and rely on each other.

- **Producers** make their own food
- **Consumers** eat plants or animals
- **Decomposers** break down and eat dead plants and animals

Discussion

3. Compare what students found and talk about them, using the following questions as a guide:

- *What was the most colourful producer you found?*
- *Did you see a consumer in action?*
- *What was the decomposer you found eating or decomposing?*

Continue the conversation by talking about how every living thing in an ecosystem is important for the ecosystem to be healthy. Talk about what we can do to help ecosystems stay healthy, for example:

- What small action could you take today to help a producer? (*example: plant a seed, help make sure plants have good soil to help them grow by tilling or composting*)
- What small action could you take to help a consumer? (*example: leave wild animals alone, put out birdseed for birds*)
- What small action could you take to help a decomposer? (*example: compost food scraps, leave dead leaves on the ground*)

Have students decide on one action they will take to help their local ecosystem.

Scavenger Hunt!

NAMES: _____

Put a checkmark next to what you find and draw a picture of it in the box.

PRODUCERS	CONSUMERS	DECOMPOSERS
<i>A flower</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>An insect</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Something eating dead plants</i> <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>A tree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>An animal</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>A mushroom or fungus</i> <input type="checkbox"/>