

Life Science: Interactions within Ecosystems

Introduction

Most students have been interacting with a variety of living organisms from a very young age, but they are not necessarily aware of the essential role many organisms play in large systems like ecosystems. This unit enables students to study the diversity of organisms by introducing them to the characteristics of various organisms and by presenting different ways in which organisms interact. The dependence of living organisms on their physical world reinforces the interrelationships among all components of healthy ecosystems.

Ecosystems such as forests, croplands, rivers, lakes, estuaries, and oceans are inhabited by different organisms that are well adapted to their environment. Each ecosystem is biologically and physically unique, yet all ecosystems function as a systems model. Energy from the sun is fixed by plants and then transferred to a variety of consumers and decomposers. The ecosystems themselves are not independent of one another as energy, biotic and abiotic factors can move from one ecosystem to another to involve even larger relationships.