

Welcome Chaperone! Explore the Museum's main building — the Nature Exploration Center (NEC) — and be on the lookout for the animals of North Carolina. This guide offers easy activities to help you engage your students in learning.

Plants and animals in an ecosystem are connected in many ways. The two most obvious connections are through food webs and through shelter needs.

First floor, Coastal North Carolina Gallery

Food webs

Find the oval text panel titled, "On the Menu we have..." (located in front of the Sounds exhibit) This panel gives a good example of how complex food webs can be. The arrows on the panel point in the direction that the energy flows, so they point to the animal that is doing the eating.

Ask your students the following questions:

Where does the food web begin?

(plankton, algae, eel grass, detritus)

What organism has the most connections in this food web?

(pink shrimp)

Now look at the Sound exhibit.

What food web connections can you make between the plants and animals you see here?

(The right answers here are not as important as the students trying out connections. However, you can use the exhibit panel to check students' connections. Remember, the arrows on the panel point to the animal that is doing the eating.)

Third floor, Mountains to the Sea gallery,

between elevators and bathrooms

Mountains to the Sea gallery

Walk around the Savanna exhibit. (This is the ecosystem students will be learning about in class.)

Find three organisms that are producers and three that are consumers.

(HINT: Plants produce their own food through photosynthesis. Animals consume other organisms to get energy.)

What is a non-living factor that influences this ecosystem?

(fire, water, soil, temperature) — Look for text panel.

