

Chains and Webs

The food webs present in wetlands are highly dependent on the aquatic ecology. The significance of living organisms within the water is extremely important and will determine if a wetland ecosystem is successful or not. Wetland communities have at least several species of basic producers, including phytoplankton and zooplankton as well as aquatic plants. These various producers are eaten by different consumers and most consumers eat several foods.

Wetland food webs are often very complex, however they illustrate the reliance of some species on others, and the flexibility with which some species can change their food. This becomes even more important in an urban/constructed wetland when the ecosystem is starting from nothing but a hole in the ground.

Other components of food webs include human impact. As in all ecosystems, if one component of the food web is altered in some way by an outside force (e.g. flooding or the release of toxins), an impact on all aspects of the ecosystem will result. The ability of an animal to change its diet will still be reliant on the wetland to provide an alternative food. If this is not possible it either moves to another area or dies. Therefore, the success of a wetland system can be determined by the diversity and population of animals and insects present in and around the wetland.

A Wetland Food Web

Use this food web to work out your own food web at your wetland or river:

