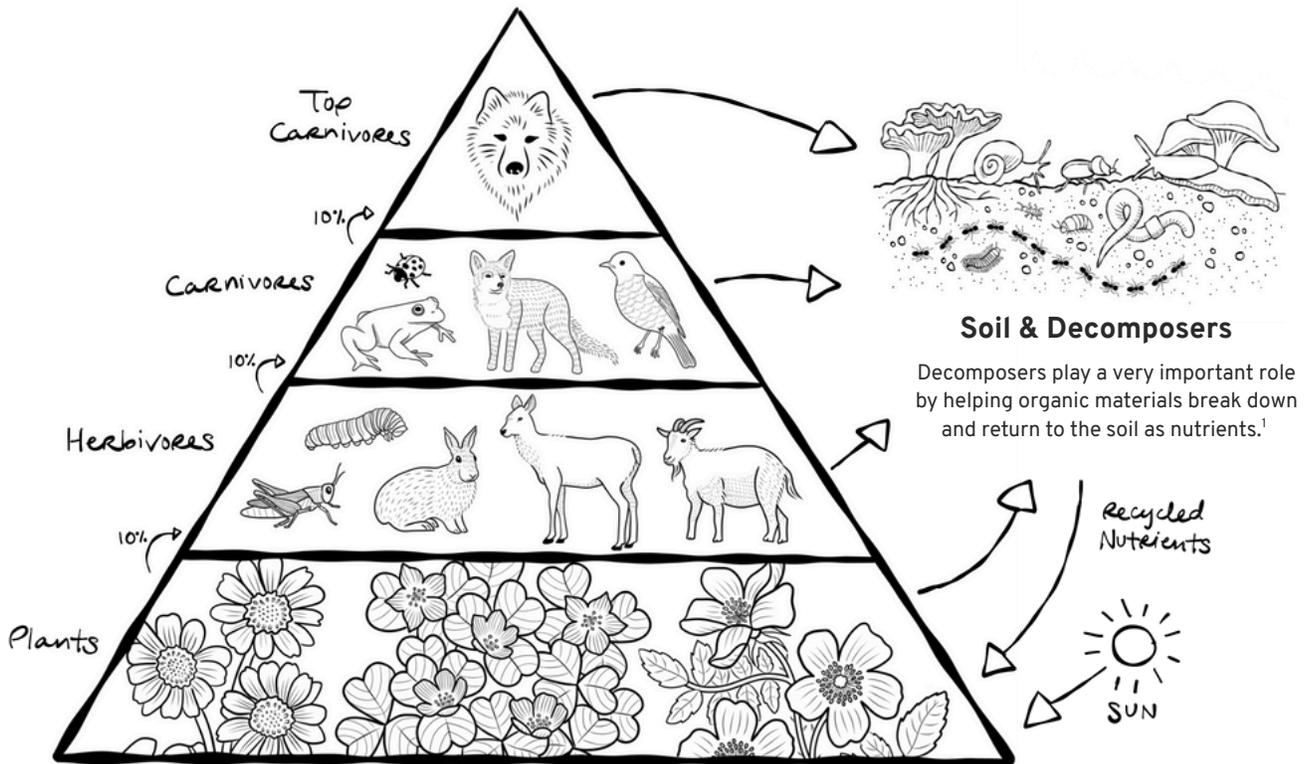


The Ecological Pyramid



Plants
PRIMARY PRODUCERS

Flowers, shrubs, trees and other plants are special because they are able to convert sunlight into energy.

Herbivores
PRIMARY CONSUMERS

Primary consumers – like caterpillars, grasshoppers, bunnies, deer and goats – eat only plants.

Carnivores
SECONDARY CONSUMERS

Secondary consumers – such as ladybugs, frogs, foxes, and many birds – mostly eat other animals and insects.

Top Carnivores
TERTIARY CONSUMERS

Tertiary consumers, like wolves and eagles (and some omnivores like humans and bears), are near the top.

For the Parents

An *ecological pyramid* can help us understand how different members of the ecosystem rely on each other to survive. The lower levels of the pyramid support everything above them.

Each time energy is transferred between levels (e.g. an animal eats a plant), only 10% of the energy is passed along and the rest is lost to heat.² This means that, in general, the closer a diet and lifestyle is to the bottom of the pyramid, the less energy it takes to generate those resources.



For the Kids

Make a triangle with the tips of your thumbs and pointer fingers. When the base of the pyramid is wide, it can support lots of plants and animals!

Next, slide your thumbs past each other, making the bottom of the pyramid narrower. See how the middle and top of the pyramid became smaller, too? When we neglect our soil and native plants, the upper levels decline as well. Supporting your local ecosystem begins with supporting your soil!