

All the plants and animals in a community have important jobs to do. A living thing's job is called its **niche**.

The main job of green plants is to make their own food by photosynthesis. Green plants are called producers because they produce food.

Consumers are living things that must eat to survive. They cannot make their own food. Consumers eat plants, animals, or both. Scientists sort consumers into three main groups: herbivores, carnivores, and omnivores.

Herbivores eat plants. Deer eat stems, leaves, bark, and twigs, while rabbits eat grass plants. Caterpillars eat leaves; some fish and ducks eat water plants; birds and some insects eat seeds.



Canada goose eating grass

Carnivores eat animal food. Wolves eat deer and rabbits; birds and bats eat caterpillars and moths; mosquitoes suck blood; some fish eat smaller fish and insects; and snakes eat frogs, mice, and insects. Many carnivores are **predators**, hunting living things (their **prey**) for food.



Mantis eating a bee

Omnivores eat both plants and animals. The robin is an omnivore. It eats berries and fruits (plant food) as well as caterpillars, earthworms, insects, and spiders (animal food). Bears eat fish and berries; humans eat fruit, cereals, vegetables, milk, eggs, meat, and fish.

Scavengers are animals that eat dead animals. If scavengers didn't do this, the woods, fields, and oceans would be piled high with centuries of dead animals!



A turkey vulture with a dead animal.

Decomposers feed on dead and decaying animals and plants and animal wastes. Bacteria, fungus, worms, some insects, centipedes, and sowbugs are decomposers. They change decaying matter into nutrients in the soil. Plants take up the nutrients and use them to make food for themselves.



Fungi

As you can see, every living thing in the community has a job to do.