

Web of Life: Orcas, Salmon, and Watersheds

Background: No animal or plant species survives or thrives in this world without forming relationships with other animals, plants, and the environment itself. Therefore, it is important to uncover these connections, dynamics, and cause-and-effect relationships to better understand how and what a species needs to survive. Southern Resident orcas rely on salmon as their main source of food, and salmon rely on healthy rivers and watersheds. Habitat that is hundreds of miles away from the ocean may seem like it doesn't affect orcas or other marine life – but everything is connected in the Web of Life!

Activity Materials: You will need a ball of yarn or string for this activity. This activity works best with three or more participants. A great learning opportunity for families and friends together!

Activity: *Start of Activity.* We have ten words (the word bank) about orcas, salmon, watersheds, and habitat – your goal is to see how they are all connected. Cut out the words from the word bank and flip them upside-down so that they are chosen at random. To start this activity, one participant will hold the ball of string in their hands, representing an orca.

Gameplay. A second participant will pick one of the words at random. Then, this participant will try to identify one real-world connection between the orca and the word they chose. All other participants must agree that the connection stated is a valid one – feel free to challenge the connection or ask for an explanation! If valid, the ball of string is tossed to the participant who drew the word and made the connection, while the original “orca” holds on to the end of the string. If invalid, the participant will return the word to the word bank, the word bank is reshuffled, and a new participant will choose a different word and try to make a connection.

First Word Drawn: Salmon.

Valid Example: Orcas eat salmon.

Invalid Example: Orcas buy ice cream from salmon.

Keep going with the words and the players, making valid connections for each new word drawn. You can connect a new word to any of the words currently “in play,” just make sure the string follows the connections between words. Each player who makes a connection holds on to part of the string while the ball is passed along – eventually you will end up with the “web of life” and see how everything is connected!

For example, a participant made a valid connection between the word drawn (salmon) and orcas. The next participant drew the word “kelp.” This participant would then need to make a valid connection between “salmon” and “kelp” or “orcas” and “kelp” for the string to be tossed to them.

Game Ending: The game ends after all words have been drawn from the word bank, unveiling the Web of Life!

Word Bank:

Start with: Southern Resident orca (your ball of string); cut out the words below and shuffle into your word bank.

Salmon	Herring
Eelgrass	Kelp
POPs (persistent organic pollutants)	Stormwater
Rivers	Estuaries
Dams	Pacific Ocean

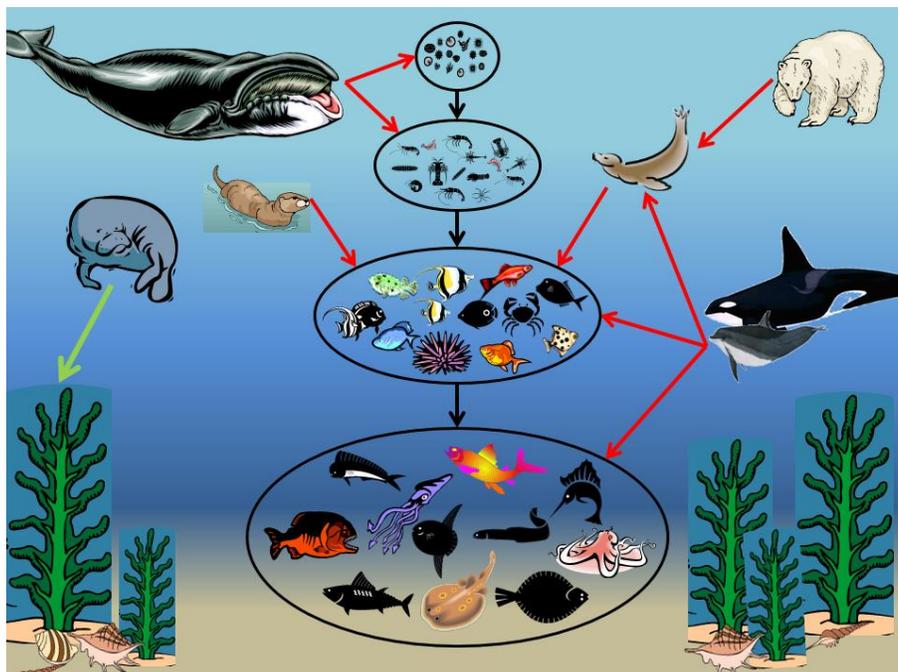


Image: Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute