

Learning Laguna Field Activity: Web of Life

Goal: To experience the interdependence and connectedness of all life.

Group forms a circle. Leader stands inside the circle near the edge with the ball of yarn.

Beginning Question: Who can name the tree that is a keystone species in the Laguna watershed?

➤ Answer: **Oak**, Valley or Black

Comment: Good that's right, **oak**, so we will start the web here because the oak is a keystone species. Does everyone understand the concept of a keystone species? (Explain if you think they don't really get it. Imagine an arch made of stones that are perfectly fitted together to form the arch. The "key – stone" is the one at the top that wedges all the other stones perfectly into place. If that stone came out, the arch would collapse.)

Start the yarn with the participant who answers the first question. Hand the ball to them and tell them to hold on to the end. Explain that the person holding the yarn ball will toss the ball to the person who answers the next question. Each person who catches the yarn has to hold onto the yarn because "once you are part of the web of life, you can't let go – you are always part of the web of life."

There are 2 possible questions to start the web.

Question 1: What does the **oak** need to thrive in the Laguna?

➤ Answer: **Water, sun, or soil** (go to question 3)

Toss the ball of yarn to who answered the question and say "Now you are part of the web of life"

Go to Question 3.

Or Question 2: Who is dependent on the **oak** for habitat or food?

➤ Answer: A variety of birds (acorn woodpecker, owl, etc.), or mammals (squirrels, mice, jack rabbits, etc.) or insects (spiders, wasps, etc.)

Toss the ball of yarn to who answered the question and say "Now you are part of the web of life"

Skip Question 3. Toss the ball of yarn to who answered the question.

Comment: Yes, that is right, the "squirrel" is dependent on acorns, who would eat a squirrel? Or what else does the squirrel need?

The questioning continues by asking either: What would (fill in the blank: the oak, birds, mammals, etc) need to survive (use, thrive)? Or What would need (fill in the blank) to survive (use, thrive)? **Ask questions until everyone is on the web, remembering to say each time, "Good, now you are part of the web of life."**

Question 3: Is there an animal or bird who lives here that also needs _____ to survive? (water, sun or soil)

➤ Answer: A variety of birds(acorn woodpecker, owl, etc.),
mammals (squirrels, mice, jack rabbits, etc.)
insects(spiders, wasps, etc.)

Comment: Yes, that is right, the _____ also needs _____ for it's survival. (whatever the answer was to the previous question)

The key to this activity being successful is in being able to ask nonlinear questions and to keep the questions flowing in order to develop a whole web.

For example, if the answer to the previous question is “duck”, the next question could be:
What else does the “duck” need to live here in the Laguna ?

Or, Who eats the duck?

Or, What does the duck eat?

Continue asking the questions “Who is dependent on _____? What else grows under the oak tree – or – what else would eat _____ on the oak tree?

Or, Who eats _____?

Or, What does the _____ eat?

Sun, water and soil can be repeated if the group is having difficulty coming up with answers until everyone in the circle is holding the yarn and a web is formed.

Look at the pattern the yarn has formed. Have everyone hold up their arm to show the pattern. Say; “We are the Web of Life!”

Describe an event where the tree or a branch of the tree falls to the ground. The person who started the web, **the oak**, tugs on the yarn and lowers their arm.

Now, everyone who felt a tug gives a tug. The web gradually comes closer to the ground as each person feels the tug and lowers their arm. Ask questions for the docents to answer to keep it moving at this point. “When the branch(es) are on the ground, what happens?” (the wood begins to decompose) “What happens next?” (rich soil is created)

Talk about the acorn that was on the branch that fell* and how this acorn will thrive underneath the rotting wood and leaf mulch to sprout and produce a new oak tree that will **continue this web of life**.

*If there are lots of people, you can continue the questioning so that everyone is included in the web (ie. Now the wood is starting to rot, who would like rotting wood? Insects... who would eat insects.... Birds. What else would benefit from a rotting piece of oak tree? The soil....A bird could plant an acorn in that soil...) until you arrive at the new web of life cycle. “And now we have come to a new web of life and the cycle continues.”