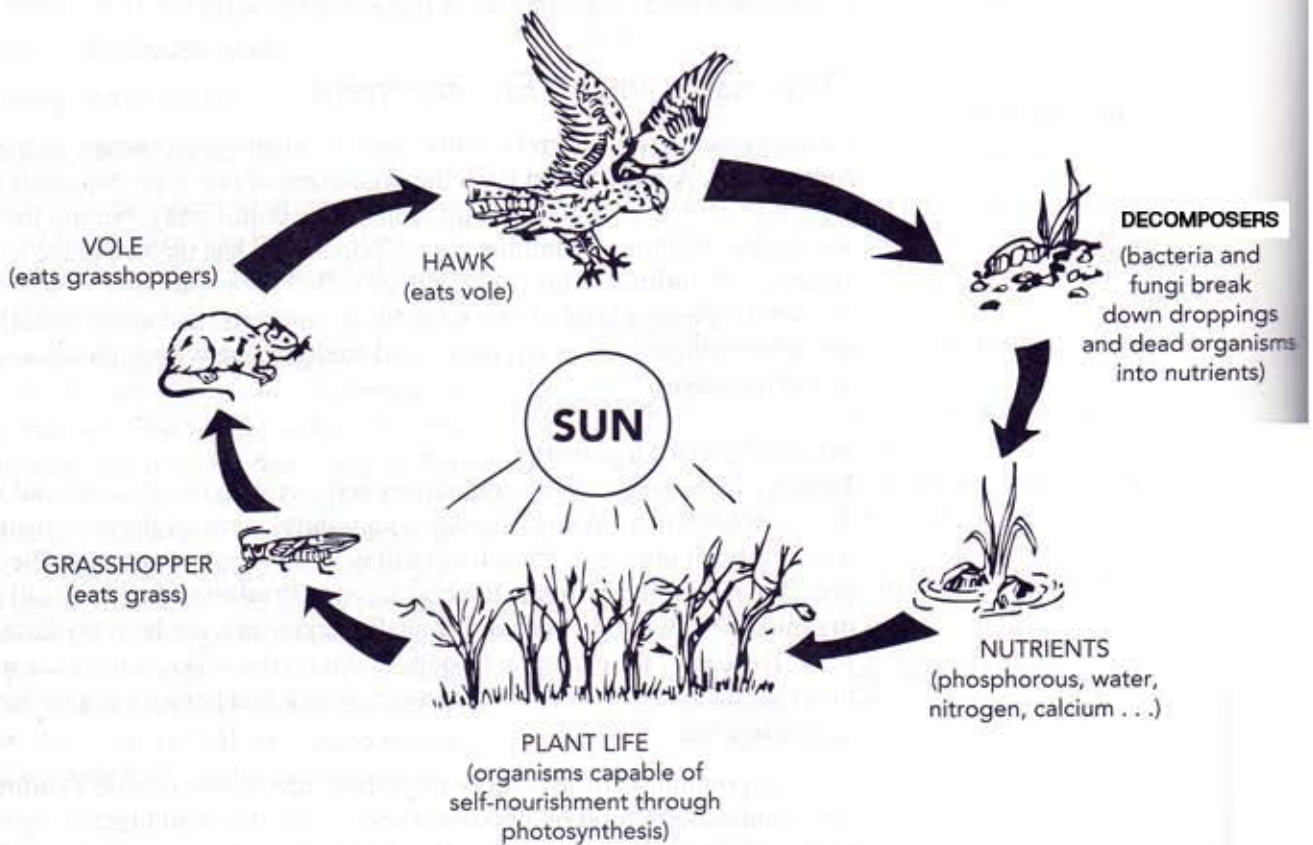


Energy Cycles

Energy from the Sun is the source of almost all life on Earth. Green plants (the producers) trap energy during photosynthesis and convert it into glucose. Herbivores, such as cows and deer, eat the green plants. Carnivores, such as bears and falcons, eat other organisms. Omnivores, such as humans and raccoons, eat both plants and animals.

The **food chain** is the path that energy follows as it moves through the community. It starts with green plants (the producers) and moves on through herbivores. Large carnivores are usually at the top of the food chain. When an organism dies, decomposers break apart the body, returning the nutrients to the soil. All the many food chains within a community form a **food web**. A change in the population of one organism of the food web will affect every other organism.

THE FOOD CHAIN



As demonstrated in the food chain above, each living thing is food for the next; for example, plants become food for grasshoppers, grasshoppers become food for voles, and voles become food for hawks. The hawks' droppings become food for bacteria, which turn it into nutrients for grass.