

Name: _____

Date: _____

■ Types of Consumers Reading Passage

TYPES OF CONSUMERS

A consumer or heterotroph cannot make its own food. A consumer feeds on other organisms to obtain food. The food provides energy needed to power all the processes in the organism. We classify consumers based on the type of food an organism eats.

Herbivores feed on plants only. They feed on leaves, stems, seeds, pollen or nectar. Herbivores are also known as primary consumers. This means they are the first consumer in a food chain. Butterflies, grasshoppers, ants, deer, rabbits, cows, horses, giraffes and elephants are examples of herbivores.

Omnivores feed on plants and animals. They have a diverse diet consisting of plant material as well animals. Many mammals are omnivores, including humans. Most birds are omnivores too.

Carnivores feed only on animals. In fact, carnivore means meat eater. Carnivores obtain food from other animals by predation. Lions, tigers, wolves, coyotes, owls, hawks, sharks and snakes are examples of carnivores.

Scavengers feed on dead or decaying animals or plants. They do not hunt organisms. Instead, they consume leftover dead remains or decaying plant materials. Some scavengers feed on waste produced by other organisms too. Scavengers play an important role in feeding. They consume food from sources that would otherwise go to waste in an ecosystem. Vultures, crows, hyenas, raccoons, beetles, crabs and lobsters are examples of scavengers. Some carnivores will scavenge food if hunting is unsuccessful.

Decomposers are a type of consumer. They are similar to scavengers. They obtain nutrients from dead organisms. However, they break down dead animals and plants rather than just consuming this material for food. They also break down waste produced by organisms. They break down this material in organic matter. Organic matter is rich in nutrients. Fungi, bacteria and some worms are examples of decomposers.

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■ Types of Consumers Answer Sheet

Questions

1. What is a consumer?

2. What is the difference between an herbivore, omnivore and carnivore?

3. What is the difference between a scavenger and decomposer?

4. Why might a carnivore become a scavenger?

5. What type of consumer would be most successful at finding food in an environment? Justify your answer.
