Make a Sea Otter Food Web

Age: 5+

Education Blurb: Just a few hundred years ago, sea otters peppered the west coast of America and Canada. While a host of human impacts are to blame for keeping otters near the edge of extinction today (loss of habitat, competition, diseases, oil spills), it was the fur trade that diminished their number to only a few dozen in the early 1900s.

Otter fur was prized for its softness and warmth – the warmest of the animal kingdom. It was so prized, that the otter fur trade wiped them from existence.

An International Fur Seal Treaty was signed in 1911, which protected otters from hunting, but perhaps came too late as there were only 13 small groups of otters remaining from Mexico to east Asia.

Since then, we have made attempts at relocating some sea otters from Alaska to British Columbia and have seen some success, in that their population is beginning to rise, and they are beginning to reestablish their natural population range.

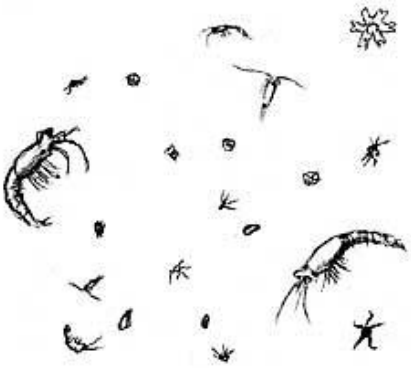
Steps and materials

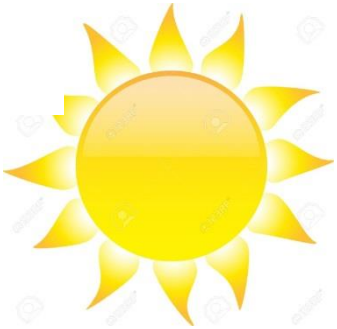
Split the club into 2 groups. Each group will be given all the members that play a role in the sea otter food web. Teams will race against each other to try and complete the sea otter food web the fastest.

Once both teams have the correct food web, remove the sea otter and ask them to adjust their food web. Ideally, all players should be removed, which illustrates how important sea otters are to the food web. Explain that sea otters are a keystone species (a species on which other species in an ecosystem largely depend, such that if it were removed the ecosystem would change drastically).

CREATE A SEA OTTER FOOD WEB!

Use the following images to create a sea otter food chain. To symbolize where an image gets its energy, use an arrow. Example, plants get their energy from the sun, so the food chain would look like this:





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