**Description:** Students go into a habitat area to learn about, identify and explore ecosystem components. Students go on a scavenger hunt to find and identify evidence of components, and then draw this evidence. These drawings are used in the *Ecosystem Web of Life* activity, which follows, to create a ‘web of life’ for the habitat.

**Objectives:**
- Students learn about concepts of ecosystem components.
- Students use observation and drawing skills to locate and identify key ecosystem components.

**Print Materials:**
- Images: ‘Ecosystem Components’; ‘Ecosystem Charts’
- Master: ‘Ecosystem Explorers’ student worksheets

**Teacher supplied:**
- Copies: ‘Ecosystem Explorers’, assembled and stapled in sets (optional color paper as suggested on master sheet): 1 per student

**Activity:**
- Gather in habitat area. Say, “We’ve looked at the plants and animals of our area and the habitats in which they live. All of these plants, animals and habitats are part of the ecosystem we are now in.” Define ecosystem if needed.
- Show Images: ‘Ecosystem Components’: Non-Living (Air/Sun, Water, Rock, Soil); Living (Producer, Consumer of Producers, Consumer of Consumers, Decomposer). Define and point out examples in the habitat while viewing images.
- Show Images: ‘Ecosystem Charts’ pages 1-5 sequentially, while discussing components of the ecosystems shown and ways to define them. Return to page 1 to summarize.
- Ask students, “Can we find evidence of:
  - Non-living components in our ecosystem?” (water puddle, rain, sunlight, shadow, rocks, soil, etc.)
  - Producers in our ecosystem?” (all green plants)
  - Animals?” (worms, birds, insects, animal sounds, holes in trees, chew marks, trails)
  - Consumers (birds, mammals, amphibians, spiders and many insects such as bees and ants)
  - Decomposers (grubs, termites, slugs, snails, pill bugs, worms, plus fungi, lichen, mushrooms)
- Pass out ‘Ecosystem Explorers’ sets. State that, “The first page shows the ecosystem cycle of renewal that we’ve been talking about. Now, we are going to look for ecosystem components. First we will do a scavenger hunt, and then we will do drawings of ecosystem components.”
- Ask students to turn to “Ecosystem Explorer Scavenger Hunt”. Say, “Your job is to find all of the ecosystem components listed. Point out the ‘clues’ on each page. Ask students to be as specific and descriptive as possible (i.e., a producer should be a fern, maple tree, etc; not ‘plant’). Walk through habitat area and have students fill out the scavenger hunt portion of their worksheets. Help students identify plants around them.
- After completing the scavenger hunt, ask students to find evidence of the major ecosystem components (i.e., producers, consumers, decomposers, non-living). Have them draw each component on its corresponding page. Work with students to help them understand how to find and draw images of obvious and subtle evidence (i.e., dead leaves can represent ‘living’ producers, holes in wood can represent decomposers, cloud can represent water, spider can represent animal, etc). Encourage students to find a wide variety of consumers, decomposers and producers. Gather together and share results. Label the forms as possible with information (name of animal, etc).
- Ask, “Which ecosystem components were easy to find? Which were scarcer?” (generally producers are easier to find than consumers and decomposers). “What do you think the results would be if we studied another ecosystem?” (different producers, consumers and decomposers, types of non-living components).
- Summarize: “The habitat area has many examples of all the ecosystem components. It is a working ecosystem.”

**Vocabulary**
- **Ecosystem:** the complex of a community of organisms and its environment functioning as an ecological unit
- **Ecosystem components:** major parts of an ecosystem made up of living (plants and animals) and non-living (air, sun, water, rock) factors

**Washington State EALRs**
- Arts 1.2 Develops arts skills and techniques.
- Communication 1.2 Listen and observe to gain and interpret information.
- Science 1.3.10 Understand how organisms in ecosystems interact with and respond to their environment and other organisms. Explain how an organism’s role and non-living factors contribute to the stability of an ecosystem. 2.1.4 Understand that models represent real objects, events, or processes. Create a simple model to represent common objects, events, systems, or processes. Investigate phenomena using a simple physical model or simulation. Describe reasons for using a model to investigate phenomena.

**Science Kit:** Ecosystems