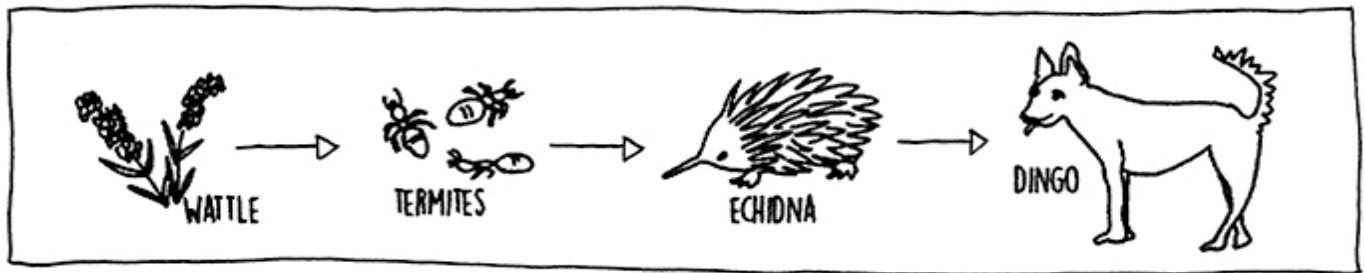


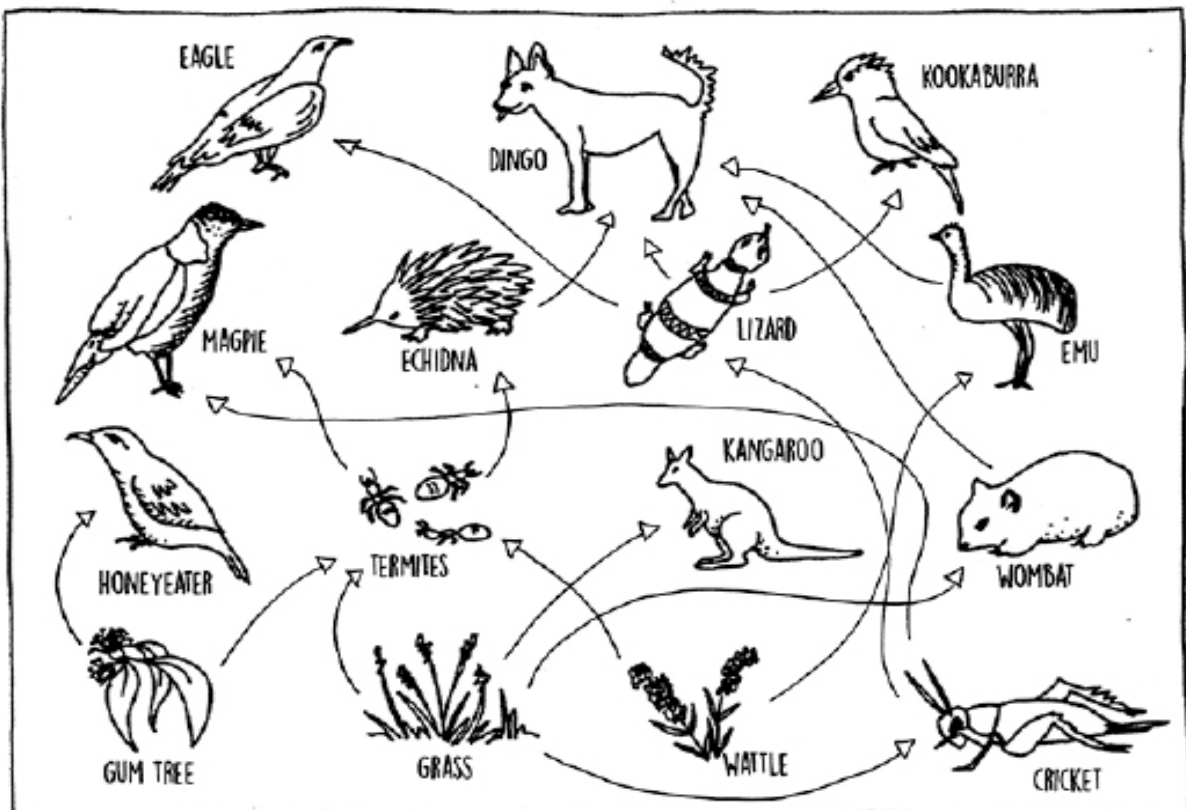
Food Chains and Food Webs

A food chain shows the feeding relationships between plants and animals, showing the flow of energy between organisms. Plants are at the beginning of the food chain, and they get their energy from sunlight. Herbivores get their energy from eating the plants. Carnivores get their energy from eating other animals. Omnivores get their energy from both plants and animals.

When creating a food chain you use arrows to show these relationships. It is important to note that the arrow always points to the animal that has just eaten something, to show the flow of energy. For example, when a herbivore eats a plant, the energy from the plant is absorbed by the herbivore. Thus the arrow would point from the plant towards the herbivore.



But nature isn't as simple as a food chain. Relationships in nature are complex and involve all sorts of interconnections and energy flows that are best shown as a food web. The picture below shows an Australian food web.



You can see from this food web that the flows of energy go in all sorts of directions and weave and wind around each other. You can also see that generally the smaller animals, like insects, live at the bottom of the food web and have a greater number of predators. The number of predator-prey relationships decreases the further up the food web you go.