





Themepark

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| communication | cycles | exploration | home/habitat | imagination |
| insects | liberty | patterns | systems | curriculum search |

cycles

- Water Cycles
- Energy Cycles
- Life Cycles of Animals
- Life Cycles of Plants
- Seasonal Cycles
- Planetary Cycles
- Rock Cycles
- Geophysical Cycles
- Cycles of Nature**
- Chemical Cycles
- Disease Cycles

Cycles of Nature

Nature's cycles have to do with how the earth renews itself. The living things within an ecosystem interact with each other and also with their non-living environment to form an ecological unit that is largely self-contained. Sometimes this renewal process is gradual and gentle. Sometimes it is violent and destructive. Nevertheless, ecosystems contain within themselves the resources to regenerate themselves.

Sample some of the following activities to learn more about the cycles of nature.

- [Places To Go](#) • [People To See](#) • [Things To Do](#) • [Teacher Resources](#) • [Bibliography](#)



Places To Go

The following are places to go (some real and some virtual) to find out about the cycles of nature.

American Rivers Association

Rivers need our help to maintain their natural cycles. Visit the river nearest your home. Rivers, streams and lakes are the lifeblood of the natural world. Just as the human body depends on blood vessels to carry nutrients throughout the body, the natural world depends on rivers, streams and lakes to do the very same thing.

California Underground

Visit caves virtually or in person. Timpanogas Cave in American Fork Canyon is a great place to learn about caves. This website explains cave formation from volcanic action. Find out about the process of formation for **stalactites and stalagmites**. This **portion** of the **Carlsbad Cavern** site has classroom activities about caves.

Mammoth Caves

Take a virtual trip to Mammoth Cave in Kentucky. This cave is the longest cave in the world. It measures about 350 miles, and there is still more cave yet to be explored! There have been archaeological investigations of the cave for more than 100 years. It is thought that people have been using Mammoth Cave for varied purposes for almost 4,000 years.

Mississippi River

Virtually float down the Mississippi. Rivers erode land, transport sediment and materials along the river valley, and deposit them farther along and send them eventually out to sea. Dams keep rivers from running their natural course and can interfere with the natural cycle of a river that benefits the environment. The Aswan Dam across the **Nile** has prevented most of the river's rich sediment from being deposited farther downstream.

Recycle City

Visit Recycle City and learn how to recycle, reduce, and reuse waste the earth's resources.



People To See

Arctic Lemming

Spend time with a **lemming** to learn about an unusual cycle of nature. Lemmings are small rodents that live in the arctic tundra from Alaska to the Scandinavian countries to Russia. Many animals hibernate during long, cold winters. However, lemmings do not hibernate and they do not store extra layers of fat to protect them from freezing temperatures. They have very very thick coats that are waterproof. As a result, lemmings are able to live underneath snow which insulates them from cold. Because lemmings don't hibernate and are active year-round, they have up to 3 litters of pups a year. Each litter produces from 1-11 young. About every 4 years, the lemming population becomes so big that it causes a shortage of resources. This is called a "lemming year". During a lemming year, the lemmings have to roam farther to find food. The sheer number of lemmings in an area stresses them so that they begin to move haphazardly in many directions. The result is that many die from starvation and from exhaustion. Others try to cross rivers and lakes in large numbers and drown. At the end of a lemming year, the population density returns to normal, and then the cycle begins again.

All About Wolves

Visit with the wolves of Yellowstone National Park and see how their controversial return has affected plant life, other animals, and the ranchers who make their living in the Yellowstone area.

Historical Bushfires and Wildfires in Australia

Spend time with citizens of **Australia**. They are often subject to wildfires which ravage their continent. The cycle of fire in nature is actually a normal cycle and can be beneficial to ecosystems, and most fire is caused by lightning. However, when these wildfires encroach upon densely inhabited areas, the results are devastating. In Australia, the wildfires are fueled by native eucalyptus trees. Eucalyptus trees contain a lot of oil. When they burn, they often explode which causes the fire to spread even more quickly.

How Caves Form

Get to know scientists who study caves. The **formation of caves** is an interesting cycle of nature. Stalagmites (the **formations** that point upward) and stalactites (the formations that point downward) are primarily composed of calcite crystals.

Surtsey

Get to know the inhabitants of the island of **Surtsey**. The inhabitants are mostly birds, insects, and seals. The island of Surtsey, off the coast of Iceland, was formed from 1964 to 1968 as a result of volcanic activity. It has become a place for scientists to study the cycles of nature as the island has slowly become inhabited with plants and animals.

William Morris Davis

Meet William Morris Davis. He was an American geologist who was one of the first to suggest the idea of erosion cycles. He saw that landscapes are constantly being built up and worn down.



Things To Do

Food Chains & Food Webs

Explore the cycle of worldwide **food chains** and food webs. Some food chains are long as when a phytoplankton is eaten by a zooplankton; a zooplankton is eaten by a herring; a herring is eaten by a codfish; a codfish is eaten by a porpoise; a porpoise is eaten by a killer whale. Some food chains are short as when a whale shark (which is the world's largest fish) feeds on plankton, one of the smallest organisms in the ocean.

Great Salt Lake Ecology

Learn about the ecology of the Great Salt Lake and explore its fascinating microenvironments.

The Gulf Stream

The Gulf Stream begins off the southern coast of Florida and then heads north along the east coast of the U.S until it reaches North Carolina. Then it turns east and crosses the North Atlantic. Off the coast of Europe, it turns south and flows back across the Atlantic Ocean through the Caribbean Sea and ends and begins again off the southern coast of Florida.

Jellyfish

Explore fascinating jelly fish. Because jellyfish can give some of the most **powerful stings** of any animal, most predators and other fish stay away from them. Often the baby or juvenile fish of many different species will float among the tentacles of the jellyfish. The **jellyfish** is unaware of them, and the tiny fish are given a safe place to grow larger. This relationship between newly born fish is part of the cycles of nature that help species prosper in their environments.

Recycling and Beyond

Learn about recycling with games, activities, and a cool recycling story. Be sure to click on the It's Not All Garbage! Link to take the recycling quiz.



Teacher Resources

Hotlists from UEN provide internet sites to visit to find out more about specific topics--in this case, cycles of nature! (You can learn how to use this **WWW Activities** tool created by UEN for Utah educators).

- Coral Reef Hotlist
- Rainforest Hotlist
- Wetland Hotlist



Virtual Field Trips are teacher and student-created tours of curricular topics. (You can learn how to use this UEN **Virtual Field Trip** tool created by UEN for Utah educators).

- Fire Ecology
- Wetlands & Riparian Zones



Lesson Plans

- Newton's Apple - Glaciers
- Newton's Apple - Spelunking
- Newton's Apple - Wetlands



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