



The food pyramid of a pond. The total mass of organisms at any level requires a far greater amount of matter for support in the level below it. Disparity between amounts at each level is far greater than shown.

redissolved material serves as nutrient for further plant growth. Those materials not completely decomposed pile up on the pond bed, forming organic mud.

Thus, little of the mineral and organic matter that comes into a pond leaves it, even if there is out-flowing water. Only a bit departs in flights of emerging insects or in fish carried away by natural predators or anglers.

The interlinked food relationships between organisms form a "food web." The web-like structure gives stability to the fishes' food supply and to the pond's living community. When a part of the web breaks, as when a disease kills off one kind of animal, other kinds remain which may substitute in its role as food for some animals and as a consumer of other organisms—until repopulation of the devastated animal can take place.

When we manipulate a pond ecosystem to make it produce especially great amounts of one or several kinds of fish, this often involves a lessening of the kinds of habitats and kinds of organisms in the pond. This removes many links of the food web and may make the living community less stable.

For example, we purposely build ponds to have little diversity of habitat so that only a few kinds of organisms can thrive there—the fishes we particularly want and a few kinds of food organisms for them. We build uniformly steep pond side slopes to discourage plants because they interfere with fishing and allow development of too many young fish. We dredge smooth, deep pond bottoms suited for maximum fish growth and for seining to remove undesired fish. We try to ensure a short, efficient food chain by stocking only one or