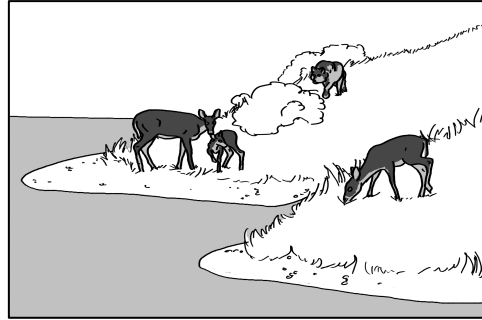


Big Idea Probe: Wolves and Deer

Ms. Ruiz's class is starting the *Carbon TIME* Ecosystems Unit and just took the pretest. Five students were talking about the deer and wolves question and they all had different ideas about what the best answer is and why. Here's the question and what they thought...



A remote island in Lake Superior is uninhabited by humans. The primary mammal populations are white-tailed deer and wolves. The island is left undisturbed for many years. Circle the best choice to complete the statement about what will happen to the average populations of the animals over time. On average, the populations of deer and wolves will fluctuate, but:

Joy thinks (a) there will be more deer than wolves because there is more food available for the deer than there is for the wolves.

Irena thinks (b) there will be more wolves than deer because the wolves will eat the deer and there is no predator on the island that will eat the wolves.

Tomás thinks (c) the populations of each would be about equal because there is a natural balance in the ecosystem that will keep the populations about equal.

Cory thinks (d) sometimes there will be more deer and sometimes there will be more wolves because the populations will keep each other in check. When one species' population gets too high the other species will bring it back down, limiting the population.

Wei thinks (e) none of the above because there isn't enough information to make an accurate prediction. We need to know more about the vegetation and terrain of the island to make a prediction about its carrying capacity for wolves and deer.

Who do you agree with and why do you think they have the best answer? It's OK to pick more than one person. Explain why you chose the answer(s) you did.
