



# Changes to food chains

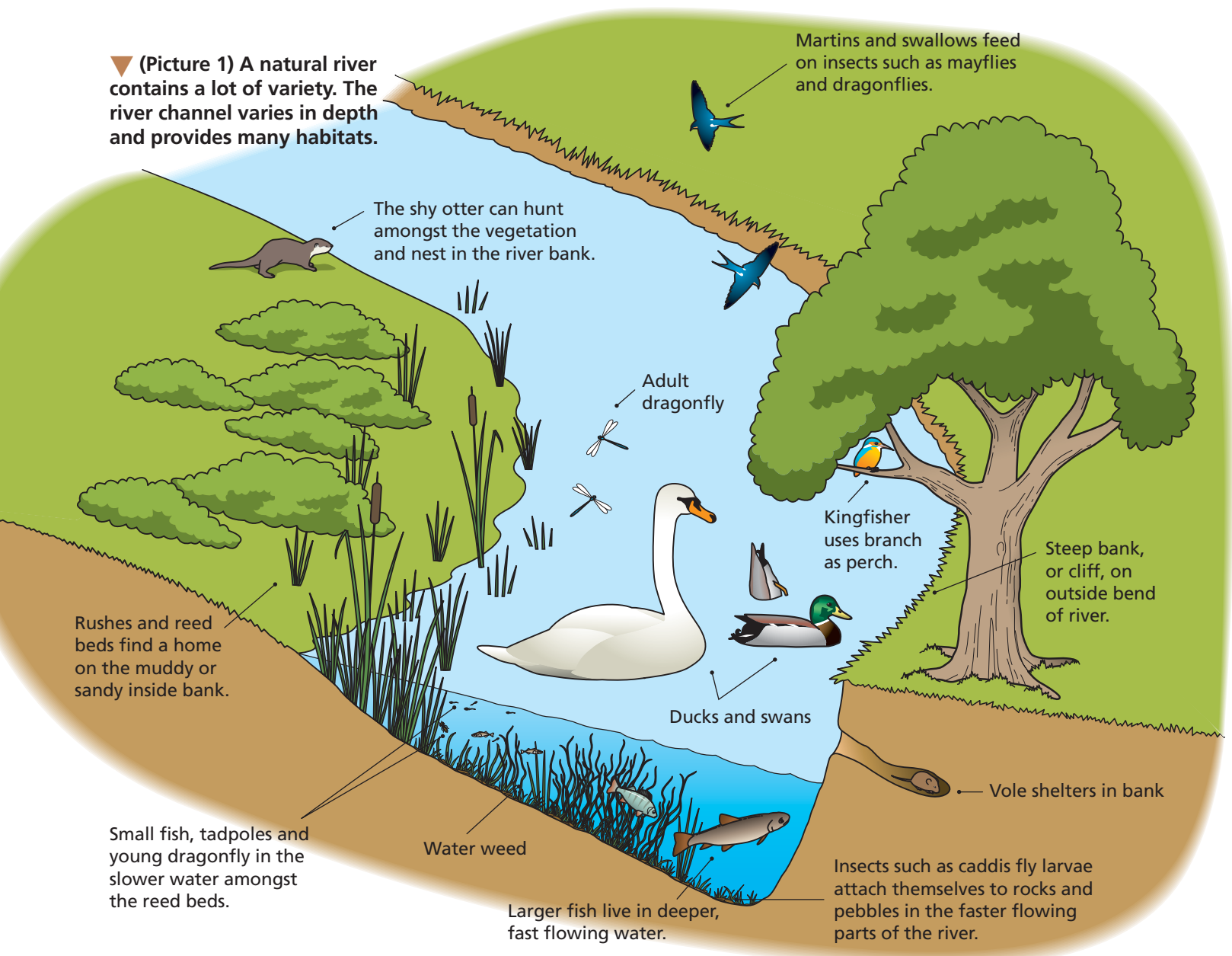
When rivers are cleared out, the habitats for many living things may be lost.

Rivers are a common part of our landscape. But they can be changed dramatically. This happens when people get worried about rivers flooding, want to use rivers for boats, or want to use the fertile land near the river for farming.

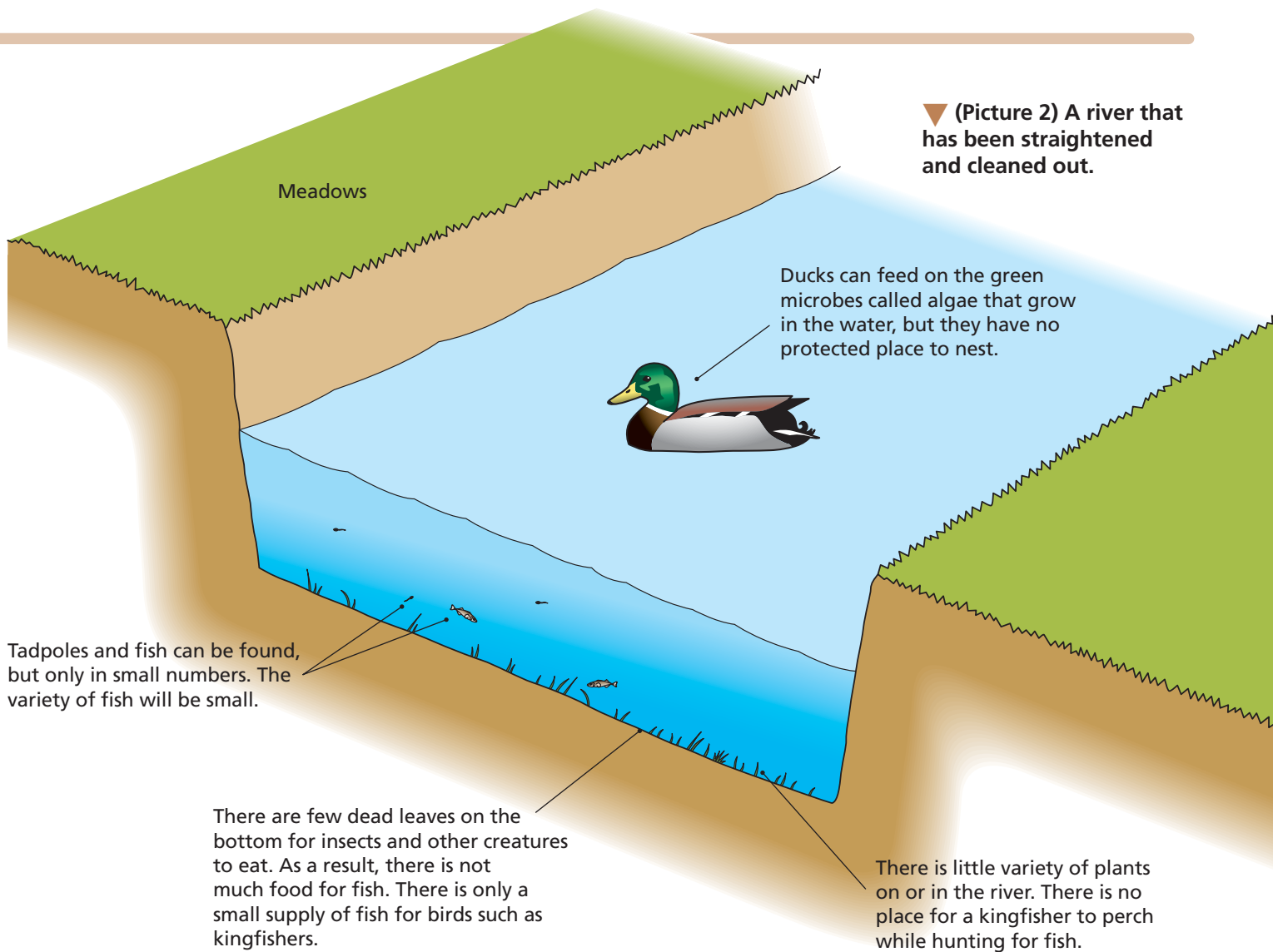
## Natural rivers and riverbanks

Picture 1 shows a part of a meandering river that has been undisturbed by humans. You can find a large variety of animals here, and you should be able to make out some food chains. The main

▼ (Picture 1) A natural river contains a lot of variety. The river channel varies in depth and provides many habitats.



▼ (Picture 2) A river that has been straightened and cleaned out.



features are the fast and slow-flowing areas, deep and shallow areas and open and shaded areas. It is this variety that gives many different species a chance to thrive.

## Changing channels

Engineers sometimes straighten and dredge rivers because they believe it will make flooding less likely. They scrape the banks clear and smooth out the bed. This makes a channel that carries water away more quickly (it makes a large open drain). But the shelter and variety of places for

wildlife are reduced and this means that fewer plants and animals can live in such a place. You will find that many of the food chains in Picture 1 have links missing in Picture 2. Once one link is missing, the whole chain may collapse and other creatures die.

### Summary

- A natural landscape has a wide variety of habitats for plants and animals.
- A managed landscape can lose most of its habitats, making it difficult for many species to survive.