

Camouflage

Outdoor Activity

Curriculum: Science, Physical and Outdoor Education



Introduction:

The game of “Camouflage” is an engaging winter activity exploring animal adaptations. This game is well-loved, simple to facilitate, and allows students to “play out” this important winter survival technique. It can be played in all seasons and in many different habitats. It can be a short game (5 minutes) or can be extended for 20-30 minutes with several rounds.

Materials:

- Blindfolds

Instructions:

- Designate one child to be the “predator”, or “it”. This individual will be blindfolded (or have their eyes closed) and count backwards from 30 (this time can be adjusted depending on age and speed of the group). The rest of the students will be “prey” and will hide in the wooded area.
- Once the predator’s blindfold is removed they begin to search (with their eyes) to find their hidden classmates. They are not allowed to move their feet, however, they can turn around or pivot in their spot. The goal is for the predator to look for movement or flashes of colour from the prey hiding in the woods. The student that is ‘it’ will either call out the other student’s by name (if they can see them clearly) or describe what they see and point in the direction of the prey. It will then be your job, as facilitator, to tell the potential prey they’ve been caught.
- All the students that are ‘caught’ sit in a common area near the predator.

- If the predator can no longer find any prey (but there is a lot of students still hiding) then we initiate the “food and water” phase of the game. To initiate this stage, you will blindfold the predator again, have them put their hands out and call the magic words... “food and water”. This will spark all the remaining prey to leave their hiding spot and run in and tap the predator on the hand and then race back to hide again. Usually this count is shorter, about 10-20 seconds. The blindfold is removed and there are fresh prey species to find.
- The last individual to be found or the one that is closest to the predator (and didn’t get caught) is the winner. This individual is encouraged to be the predator in the next round.

Discussion:

Winter survival is difficult and animals that camouflage have this unique ‘superpower’ to help them get through the winter. The snowshoe hare is one of the most well-known animals that changes its coat in the winter. Other animals that have this special power include the weasels (least, long-tailed, and short-tailed) which are all white except for the black tip of its tail, ptarmigans which also develop white downy feet which helps them walk atop the snow, and the arctic fox. These animals are distinctly different from the white animals associated with the north, such as the polar bear or snow owls, as they remain white all year.

Learning Extension – Snowshoe Hare Hunt



Introduction:

This extension is intended for younger children (pre-kindergarten / kindergarten) and can be set up as a treasure hunt in the snow.

Materials:

- Print the lined drawings of snowshoe hare (below)
- Photocopy the hares onto different coloured paper and be sure to make white hares as well (make about 40 / 50 individual hares for one class)
- Optional - laminate the hares to increase longevity.

Instructions:

- Place the cut-outs along a snowy trail or scatter in a snowy field.

- Have the students silently walk a trail where you have placed the paper snowshoe hares. Ask the children to choose a hare that they really “like”. Alternatively ask “if they were a snowshoe hare which colour would they like to be?”
- Once everyone has walked the trail and chosen a hare do a tally of white vs coloured hares. Ask the students “how many coloured hare were collected compared with the white hare”, “which were more difficult to see in the snow?”
- Optional, you could ask children to silently count the number of hares they see. This will provide a numeracy task for your activity and allow them to reflect on how much harder it is to see the white hares in the snow.

