



Winter Camouflage

Description

Expected time: 20 minutes

In this fun-loving activity, children discover how some animals survive through the coldest season of the year.

Objective

Children will explore camouflage and how some animals blend into their winter environment.

Skills to be Developed:

Children will be able to:

- Practice their fine motor skills and gross motor skills.
- Explore how some animals blend into their environments.
- Observe how seasons affect animals.

Episode Information

Elinor Wonders Why: *Hiding in Plain Sight*

Materials

- Summer pictures of an arctic fox and snowshoe hare (see Lesson Tips)
- Winter pictures of an arctic fox and snowshoe hare (see Lesson Tips)
- Rabbit patterns – 1 per child (see Lesson Tips)
- Pencils – 1 per child
- Brown construction paper – 1 sheet per child
- White construction paper – 1 sheet per child
- Green construction paper - 1 sheet per child
- Child-safety scissors – 1 per child
- Snow on the ground (see Lesson Tips)
- Chart paper
- Marker(s)

Vocabulary

camouflage

a way of hiding something by covering or coloring it to look like its surroundings

arctic fox

a wild mammal that has a pointed nose, pointed ears, and a long thick tail that lives in the region around the North Pole

snowshoe hare

a large rabbit that has large feet with brown fur in the summer and white fur in the winter

environment

everything that surrounds a living thing and affects its growth and health; the natural world

blend

to mix so that there no longer seems to be separate parts

winter

the season of the year between fall and spring

survival

continuing to stay alive or exist

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Lesson Activity

Teacher Prep:

Note: If it's snowing out, children can do this activity with snow. Otherwise, the same concept can be taught without the snow.

1. Print out pictures of fox and snowshoe hare.
2. Print out rabbit patterns.
3. Set aside construction paper, scissors and pencils.
4. Set aside chart paper and marker(s) for chart.

Lesson Tips

- Create a K-W-L chart to assess what children know about arctic foxes and snowshoe hares prior to starting the activity.
- Search online or in books to find summer and winter pictures of arctic foxes and snowshoe hares.
- Search online to find a simple rabbit-shaped tracing pattern. The simpler the better, as it will be easier for the children to trace and cut out.
- If snow is not available, cover a large area with white sheets or several lengths of butcher paper taped together for the children to experience the concept of blending in.

Background Information

- Winter is the coldest season of the year.
- Some animals grow new, thicker fur to help keep out the harsh wind and cold.
- On some animals this new fur is white to help them hide in the snow.
- Through this change, the animal is becoming camouflaged to blend in with their surroundings.
- Camouflage is how an animal blends into its environment, hiding from a predator or prey.
- Some animals, such as the arctic fox and the snowshoe hare, change between brown and white as the seasons change in order to be concealed against their surroundings.
- Patterns also help protect animals. For instance, a fawn has spots that help it hide from predators.
- Color can also provide a warning.
- A skunk has a white stripe down its back that announces the presence of an especially good defense system.

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Introduction

1. Tell students that today they're going to learn how some animals protect themselves in the winter time.
2. Review the definition of "**camouflage**" (a way of hiding something by covering or coloring it to look like its surroundings).
3. Introduce the PBS KIDS program, ELINOR WONDERS WHY (ELINOR WONDERS WHY encourages children to follow their curiosity. The main character, Elinor, will introduce children to science, nature and community along with her friends Ari and Olive)
4. Show the clip, "Hiding in Plain Sight" Ask:
 - a. Why couldn't they see the animals?
 - b. Can you remember which animals were camouflaged?

Instructions

1. Display the pictures of the fox and snowshoe hare.
2. Discuss camouflage with the children (see Background Information).
3. Distribute rabbit patterns, construction paper, and pencils to the children.
4. Have the children trace the rabbit pattern on each piece of construction paper and cut them out.
5. Explain to the children they will now go on a scavenger hunt to find the rabbits outside.
6. Ask children to predict which ones will be easier to find.
7. Using chart paper, make a picture graph with the children's responses.
8. Collect the brown and white rabbits.
9. If cold out, ask children to put on their winter clothing before heading outside.
10. Place the cut out rabbits on the ground.

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11. Take the children outside and instruct them to find the rabbits.
12. Return to the classroom once all the rabbits have been found.
13. Ask children which rabbits were easier to find and make a picture graph with the children's responses.
14. Compare the results to their initial predictions and discuss the results.

Guiding Student Inquiry

Pre-activity:

- What's the same between the fox and the snow hare?
- What's different between the two animals?
- Which rabbit do you predict will survive the best in the snow? Why?

During-activity:

- Which rabbit do you predict will be the easiest to find outside? Why?
- Which rabbit do you predict will be the hardest to find outside? Why?

Post-activity:

- How are our findings different from our predictions?
- Which rabbits were easier to find? Why?
- What other animals blend into their environment?
- Why do some animals blend into their environment or camouflage?

Check For Understanding

- Could children describe the differences and similarities between the summer and winter pictures?
- Could children explain why the brown rabbits were easier to find than the white ones?
- Could children explain how some animals, like the snowshoe hare, blend into their environment?

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Extension Activity Ideas

1. Together, read the digital storybook *Lizard on the Loose!* The classroom pet lizard, Henry, is missing! Join the fun as Elmo and Abby look all over the classroom for Henry, who has found a little camouflage.
2. Add a camouflage sensory bin! Add flour and small plastic animals in a bin. Have children explore the bin looking for the different animals and discuss which ones camouflage better.
3. Play a game of hide and seek with the children. Have the children compare the colors of their clothing. Ask them how their clothing colors combined with the environment helps to make them easier or harder to find.
4. Take your class outside to look for animals and birds. Discuss how the animals' colors help them to blend in with their environment. If there is snow on the ground, ask the children where they think the animal could find a place to be camouflaged if it wanted to blend in with its environment.
5. Play a camouflage shape game. Cut out shapes using different colored construction paper. Hide the shapes outside in the playground. Ask children to identify which ones were easier to find and which ones camouflaged well!
6. Have a camouflage matching game. Print out pictures of different animals and cards with solid color backgrounds. Have the children practice hiding the animals in the different cards.

Suggested Books:

What Color is Camouflage? (Let's-Read-and-Find-Out Science Stage 2) by Carolyn B. Otto

Hiding in the Polar Regions (Creature Camouflage) by Deborah Underwood

Swimmy by Leo Lionni

Hidden in the Snow by Barbara Taylor

Animal Camouflage in the Snow by Martha E. H. Rustad

Home-to-School Connection

- Send letter to families
- Ask families to go on a nature walk and look for animals camouflaging in their communities.
- Then, ask the children to draw pictures of the animals they saw.

PBS KIDS for Parents Resources

Article: [7 Creative Ways to Learn about Animals](#)

Craft: [Hide and Seek With Camouflaged Animals](#)

Printable: [Observations Page](#)

PBS KIDS Game: [Hide and Seek | Elinor Wonders Why](#)

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