

Pre-visit Activities – 2nd-3rd Grade

Camouflage Critters

Introductory Information

The ability to blend in with the surroundings due to color, pattern and shape is called “camouflage”. Blending in with the surrounding habitat can mean life or death for wild animals. Consequently, camouflage is an important adaptation for them. Many predators rely on the element of surprise when hunting. If a predator is seen before it is ready to attack, chance of a successful capture is reduced. Missed opportunities can result in a less fit predator or even death due to starvation.

Blending in with the surroundings is also an important adaptation for prey. The color and texture of body coverings coupled with behaviors, such as sitting motionless, can help an animal visually disappear into its surroundings and increase its ability to avoid predation.

Objective: To construct a creature that will be well camouflaged for a specific habitat.

Materials

Sticks, pinecones, and other natural items
Leather and cloth scraps
Pipe cleaners
Scraps of paper - construction, wallpaper, etc.
Paper tubes (paper towel or toilet paper) or egg cartons
Glue
Tape
Scissors

Directions

Assign a micro-habitat (a shrub, tree, small area of grass, play structure, etc.) to each small group of students. Allow each group to spend a few minutes observing the micro-habitat. Next, have each group of students make one or two creatures (you may want to designate a minimum size) to fit into the assigned habitat and then place their critters in that habitat (no fair hiding them under anything). All groups should then visit each micro-habitat and try to find the critters. Critter creators should point out their creatures if they are not found within a reasonable amount of time, but they should keep their hands behind their backs until then. Afterward, discuss which creatures were easiest to find. Which were most difficult? Why?

(Source: Camouflage Critters activity (pg 231) in Hands-On Nature. 2000. Edited by Jenepher Lingelbach and Lisa Purcell. published by Vermont Institute of Natural Science.)

Post-visit Activities – 2nd-3rd Grade

Getting to Know You (Better)

Introductory Information

You may have heard the saying “Like a fish out of water”. We use the phrase to describe the feeling of being uncomfortable in a situation, feeling out-of-place or unqualified. Literally, a fish out of water would not survive for long and so it is with many wild animals. They would not be able to survive for long if removed from the areas that provide the things they need for survival. For the most part, wild animals live where they do because they can be successful there. Their basic needs (food, water, shelter and space) are met and they have physical and behavioral adaptations that benefit them in that environment. Understanding these principles can help you figure out what animals you might expect to see in a given environment.

Materials for dioramas

- Guidelines or cutouts for diorama frame
- Animals – clay for molding or sticks, pinecones, nuts, shells or other natural materials
- Habitats – paints, markers, soil, rocks, bark, fresh/dry plant material (let your imagination guide you)

Activity

- Working individually or in small groups, assign or allow students to pick a Pocatello Zoo animal for this project.
- Each student/group is responsible for writing a short story or report on their animal as well as constructing a diorama of the animal in its habitat.

- Written reports/stories should answer the following questions:

What does it look like?

What is its body covering (fur, feathers, etc.)?

What is the shape of its body (short and stocky, long and lean, short legged, long legged, etc.)?

How tall is it and how much does it weight?

What color is it?

Does it have characteristics that provide camouflage?

How many limbs does it have and how do they aid it in movement (# of legs, long or short legged, hooves or pads, wings, etc.)?

Other significant physical characteristics (tail, large ears or eyes, leg spurs, horns or antlers, etc.)?

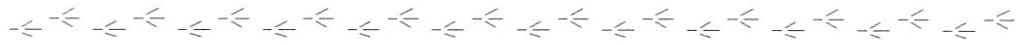
Where does it live (describe its habitat and whether it makes major seasonal habitat changes (does it migrate)?)

What does it eat (diet)?

Is it a predator, prey or both (who does it eat and who eats it)?

Also, name at least one thing about the animal that you found particularly interesting.

- Dioramas should portray the animal in its natural habitat. Remind students that in order to survive, an animal's habitat must include food, water, shelter and space.
- Completed projects can be presented to the class or displayed.



TRACK DETECTIVES (2nd/3rd grade activity)

Have you ever looked at the tracks left behind when someone walks in mud, in the snow, or with wet shoes on a dry sidewalk? Those tracks say "someone passed this way" and provide clues about who that someone was. You may be able to tell whether that "someone" was barefoot or wearing shoes, big or small, or whether they were walking or running. Knowing about the kind of tracks different animals make can help you become a **Track Detective**. Your job in this activity is to decide what animal made the tracks shown. Read the word clues provided and look at the track clues carefully. As you tour the zoo, find the animal(s) responsible for making that track. Hint: Additional clues may be provided on animal information signs throughout the zoo.



Animal A

I am about the same height as you but at 100-125 lbs., I probably weigh more. I have a white belly and rump and short horns. I can run very fast but cannot jump very high.

What am I?



Animal B

I am a member of the dog family. When hunting for prey, I behave much like a cat. I weigh about as much as a housecat but look bigger because I have so much fur. I also have a white tip on my tail.

What am I?



Animal C

Unlike what you might have heard about me, I am very shy and try to avoid humans. My long tail helps me change directions quickly when I hunt for my favorite food: deer. I purr like a house cat but am much bigger!

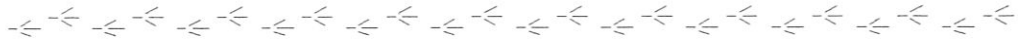
What am I?



Animal D

The underside of my bushy tail is white. I lift my tail when I run or when I sense danger. It works like a warning flag to other animals in my group. I have antlers that I shed once each year. The females in my group do not grow antlers.

What am I?



Animal E

Like the pet dog you may have at home, I run on my toes. I am similar to pet dogs in other ways too because we share the same ancestors. I hunt mostly at night. My large ears help me hear very small sounds. My keen hearing and sense of smell help me locate mice, one of my favorite foods, under the snow.

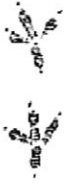
What am I?



Animal F

My body is covered with feathers rather than fur. I have keen eyesight and can spot moving prey from great heights. My feet are perfect for grasping and holding prey.

What am I?



Animal G

I am the largest animal at the zoo and the largest land mammal in North America. I weigh between 1,000 and 2000 lbs. Imagine how much grass I must eat in order to keep my weight up!

What am I?



Animal H

With my white fur and shiny black hooves and horns, you might think that I look dressed-up. Don't let my looks fool you! My thick fur helps me stay warm in my natural habitat high in the mountains. My hooves and short, muscular legs help me climb.

What am I?

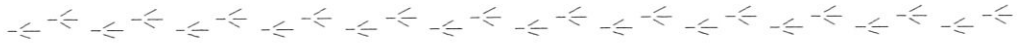


Animal I

You may not see me during your visit because I am nocturnal. That means that I am active at night and sleep during the day. I like to dig burrows in the ground. My long claws help me do that. The loose skin on my body helps me wiggle through tunnels.

What am I?





Animal J

Like my neighbor, I prefer rugged mountain areas. My thick, curled horns are used for protection and in head-banging games with members of my herd. All that weight on my head requires a double layer of bone in my skull and extra thick skin on my face.

What am I?



Animal K

My long legs are a clue that I like to wade in water and tall grass. My long bill helps me find food in the water or in grasses. A patch of bare red skin on my head should help you identify me.

What am I?



Animal L

I am a native North American. I am rather heavy for a bird but am still a strong flyer over short distances. I like to roost in the trees. I put on quite a display to show off in front of the females of my species.

What am I?



Animal M

The zoo is along my migration route so you will frequently see me here. My tracks should tell you where to look for me. My white cheek patches are another clue to my identity.

What am I?



Animal N

I am at the zoo because I choose to live here. In fact, some of my relatives had to be moved because there were so many of us here. I am one of Idaho's largest rodents but I don't climb much. I like living amongst the rocks in and around the zoo. Have you seen me sunning or running on the rocks?

What am I?

THE END



HUNTING FOR NATURAL TREASURES (2ND/3RD GRADE ACTIVITY)

1. Find a nonliving object in the exhibit with the waterfall.

2. Find a once-living object in the Bird's of Prey exhibit (east of zoo entrance).

3. Name a resource in the Mule Deer exhibit that living things need to survive.

4. Find a zoo bird that has a spoon-shaped bill.

5. Name a zoo bird in which males have a spur on the back of both legs .

6. Name a zoo bird with talons on its feet for grasping prey.

7. Find a zoo animal that hatches from an egg, has webbed feet, and has a white "chin strap".

8. Where is the marmot's shelter in the Bighorn Sheep exhibit?

9. Name a zoo animal that spends part of its life cycle in the Arctic.

10. Name a zoo animal that is not native to North America.

11. Find a zoo animal that hibernates (clue: it is not a bear).

12. Name a hooved animal that migrates from high areas to low areas.

13. Name a zoo animal whose large ears help it cool down on hot days.

14. Name a hooved zoo animal in which both males and females have horns.

15. Name an animal in the exhibit with the bison that does not give birth to live young.

16. Name a zoo animal that uses antlers for courtship and defense.

17. Name a zoo animal that uses quills for defense.

18. Name a zoo animal whose large feet help it walk on snow.

19. Name a large zoo animal whose claws are used for climbing trees.

20. Name a zoo animal that uses deer as a food item (prey).

21. Name a zoo animal that is a carnivore.

22. Name a zoo animal that eats plants and spends its time on rocky mountain slopes.

23. Find a living thing that cannot move in the Coyote exhibit.

24. Name a zoo animal that has claws adapted for digging.

25. Name a zoo animal that is a member of the cat family and has a long tail that helps it balance when making quick turns.
