

Connecting Kids to Nature

Nature is a great teacher and getting kids outside to learn and play is good for their brains and their bodies. Try this outdoor activity from Project Learning Tree® - it's safe, fun, and educational!

Birds and Worms

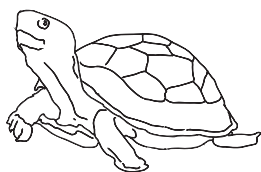
In this activity, students will discover the value of camouflage as they pretend to be birds in search of colored worms.

Many animals are “color coordinated” with their surroundings. Any coloration, body shape, or behavior that helps an animal hide is called camouflage. With the help of a few simple household items, you can take children outside to explore this concept. Collect equal amounts of small, biodegradable objects in at least three colors that can be used to represent “worms” in an outdoor setting. Consider the tri-colored rotini or spiral pasta noodles, pieces of yarn, or shreds of paper. Once outside:

- Spread or hide your colored objects (“worms”) in a defined area
- Have children “fly” around as birds and try to find the “worms”
- Make a chart or graph to visually record children’s findings

If your first trial was on grass, try the same exercise again on asphalt, or within a forested area. If you are working with multiple children, construct a relay race to find the scattered “worms.” The winner of the race is the first team to get every child on the team at least one “worm.” Children will most likely find the least camouflaged objects first. After completing the activity, ask:

- What color was easiest to find? What color was hardest to find? Why?
- Was there a pattern to the order in which the different colored “worms” were found?



Did you know a box turtle’s dappled shell mimics the spots of sunlight on the forest floor? Challenge children to find “box turtle” in this word search, along with other camouflaged organisms listed right.

Y I N K B X C K N I K S L S K D A R T W U V
A C T A D P O L E E A T T V S I O M J X H X
Y U N D N E T U E W Y H Y F N Q G E S Y J S
U R R A C C O O N L N G J Y U T U P Z W Y H
C O P P E R H E A D S N A K E H T I M N W A
I B F O W Q E L T R U T X O B G O T R E E L
W A L K I N G S T I C K C G B K R V C R U D
V K U U Y J X O J R D X D P H A X Z S R E K
U J P J H P Y D R I B G N I M M U H T B X L
O K E C E E J P K U Y Z F I G P R F I V K S
W O V S B S D Z I K R E L O M T X J F O F B
L J F L D R E D N A M A L A S R E E D V R K

- | | | | |
|------------------|--------------|------------|---------------|
| box turtle | humming bird | raccoon | squirrel |
| copperhead snake | mole | salamander | tadpole |
| deer | owl | skink | walking stick |

Make Learning Fun!

Encourage your child’s school to incorporate learning outdoors.

For more activity ideas and materials:

- Attend a PLT workshop, www.plt.org/state-network/
- Visit shop.plt.org



Project Learning Tree® (PLT) is an initiative of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

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