

UNNATURE TRAIL

Activity 14

AGE LEVEL = 8-11 (6-12)
DURATION = 25-40 min.
LEARNING STATION = Outdoors
RELATED ACTIVITY = \longleftrightarrow The Case of the
Misplaced Articles

WHEN =



UNDERSTANDING: Camouflage is an important survival strategy. Specific understanding may be developed by the leader. Refer to item one in **OPTIONS AND FURTHER EXPLORATIONS**.

SPECIAL NOTE: Although this activity can be done anywhere outdoors, it is important that there be an established trail. This activity works best in a forest.

MATERIALS:

- 15 Human-made items (clothing, salt shaker, kitchen utensils, toys, etc.)
- Paper and pencil for each child (optional)

PREPARATION: The leader should be familiar with the trail used for the activity. Place the items along the trail shortly before the hike. The objects can be placed on the ground, on rocks, in tree holes, or hung on branches, using both sides of the trail. They should not be completely hidden nor completely obvious. They should be placed no more than 4 to 5 feet off the trail.

LESSON:

Warm-up: Gather the group just before the start of the “unnature” trail. Discuss briefly the differences between human-made and natural things. Explain that they will be playing nature detectives, looking for things that don’t belong on the trail. (Note: If you are using a trail at a nature center or in a park, there may be some objects, such as trail markers, that are human-made but do belong.)

Activity: Allow 5 to 10 minutes to walk the trail. Remind the children to look up and down as well as just off the trail. You might wish to have them take paper and pencil and write down which objects they spot. You might also want to make it a competition to see which child can find the most objects.

Wrap-up: After the hike, discuss which objects were hard to find. Use them to introduce the concept of camouflage. Talk about animals that use camouflage.

OPTIONS AND FURTHER EXPLORATIONS:

1. By carefully selecting the objects, you can give your hike a specific theme. Proceed as above, but after the walk, go back down the trail and discuss each object and what it represents.

Some Suggested Objects:

- Sponge on ground -- soil’s ability to absorb water
- Strainer in tree -- tree canopy’s filtering of rain
- Salt shaker by game trail -- wildlife’s need for minerals
- Sweater by tree -- animals’ need to prepare for winter
- Flashlight by clearing in woods -- sunlight influences plant growth

- Lego block by rock -- rocks are basic building block of soil
 - Toy windmill in tree -- plants block wind
 - Holed donut in tree -- holes in trees provide homes
 - Pen by barkless log -- bark beetles engrave their signatures
2. Have the children use red cellophane sunglasses ([see Activity A](#)). The cellophane duplicates the monochromatic vision (one color vision) that many animals have and accentuates camouflage effects. Try colors and compare the results.
 3. Explore a new area and have the group look for examples of camouflage. Grasses, shrubs and bark are excellent hiding places for insects, spiders and other small animals.