

COLORFUL CONFUSION

Activity 18

AGE LEVEL = 9-11 (8-12)
DURATION = 50-70 min.
LEARNING STATION = Forest, Field
RELATED ACTIVITIES = ↔ Fox and Mice
← Rainbow Hike

WHEN =



UNDERSTANDING: Camouflage is an effective protective device for animals.

MATERIALS:

- Yarn or toothpicks (10 each of 4 or 5 colors)
- Field guides to birds or mammals
- Bar chart
- 4 or 5 felt-tip or markers (one for each yarn color)

PREPARATION: Prepare the bar chart. Before starting the lesson, select a small area (10 x 10 feet), and scatter the yarn. You may want to review the section on adaptations in the Leader's Guide.

LESSON:

Warm-up: With the group, develop a list of foods eaten by birds. Explain that they will pretend to be birds and search for special worms. Without describing what the worms look like, take them to the area where the yarn is located.

Activity: Outline the playing area and tell them they will have three minutes to gather as many worms as they can. Tell them to hunt worms while standing up, not on their hands and knees. Note that they may only pick up one worm at a time!

Wrap-up: Divide the worms up by color and make a count. Graph the results on the bar chart and discuss why some worms were more easily captured. Introduce the concept of camouflage.

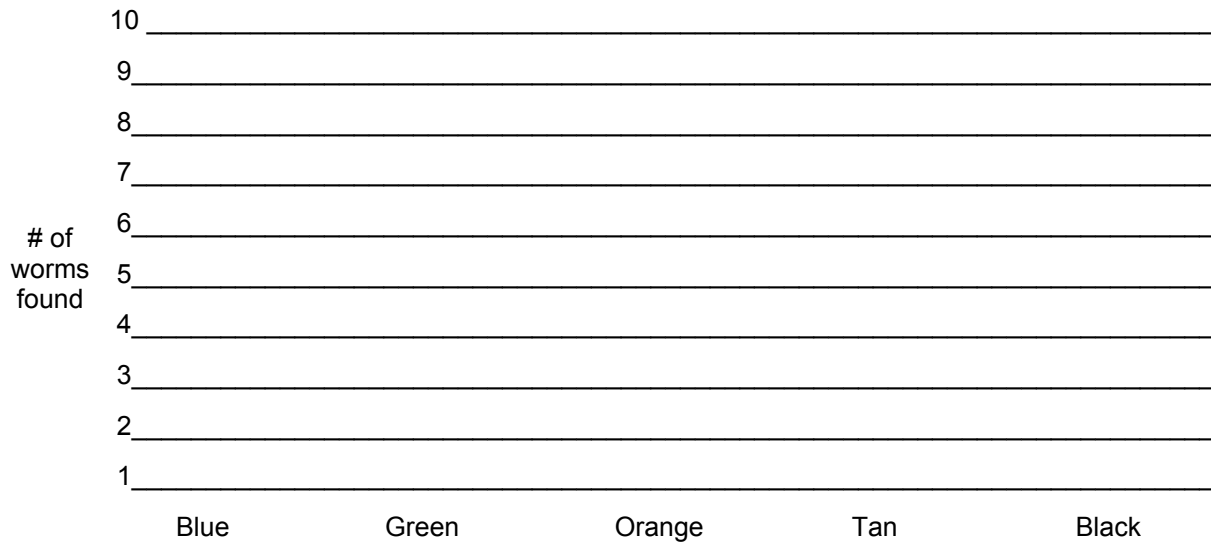
OPTIONS AND FURTHER EXPLORATIONS:

1. Select an area with a variety of natural colors and varied terrain. Divide the group into two teams. Supply model animals (made from wood or cardboard) to one team and tell them to hide the animals in a suitable habitat or one that conceals them well. Establish boundary lines and explain that they cannot bury the animals under leaves or rocks. Allow five minutes to hide the animals.

Meanwhile, with the other team, share pictures from field guides of animals that use camouflage. Discuss other animals that use camouflage and how people use it. Give the second team 10 minutes to find the animals. Reverse the teams and repeat. After both teams have had a chance to hide the animals, gather in a sharing circle. Discuss which animals remained hidden the longest. Were the animals placed in their proper habitats?

2. Discuss other techniques animals use for protection. Have the group research and present their findings using reports or skits.
3. Research camouflage in birds. Is there a difference between males and females, and if so, why?
4. Research animals that change color, either seasonally or at will (some fish and lizards can change their color within minutes).

Bar Chart



SPECIAL NOTE FOR OPTION 1:

Animal Models: the animal models used for Colorful Confusion can be made from pieces of pine or other wood. From the wood, cut out an outline of each animal (the models are two-dimensional, not three) and have an artist paint an approximation of its coloration. It is not important that the animals be painted exactly, so long as it is not depicted in solid colors. Remember that this activity focuses on camouflage. Also, it is not crucial that the size of the animals be very accurate, but they should not be extremely small. Keep available habitats in mind, but try to be diverse. For a start, make these models: owl, woodpecker, duck, bittern, chipmunk, weasel, snipe or woodcock, and rabbit.