

What's for Dinner?



Objective

Students will gain an understanding of animal interaction and the role of camouflage in the dynamics of an ecosystem.

Materials

- 3" pieces of yarn in five colors: brown, red, green, blue, and white; 30 pieces each
- four orange safety cones
- copies of What's for Dinner? worksheet
- pictures of animal camouflage
- stop watch
- pencils

Background

Many animals in the Arctic change color with the seasons. Arctic foxes, weasel-like stoats, snowshoe hares, and ptarmigans change the color of their fur or feathers from brown in the summer to white in the winter. This camouflage helps them hide from predators and sneak up on prey. In winter, white colors blend in with the snow while in the summer dark colors blend with rocks and soil.

Action

1. Mark a clear area of carpet or grass with safety cones, at least 6 m (20 ft.) square.
2. Divide students into four groups. Ask students to choose partners within their group. Students can name their group after an arctic animal.
3. While students aren't watching, distribute the pieces of yarn evenly inside the area marked by the safety cones.
4. Have students gather around the outside of the marked area and discuss the difference in colors. Can they spot some colors easier than others?
5. Explain that they are hungry animals, and the yarn is food. Each group will hunt separately (group 1 to go first.) Group partners need to decide who will hunt and who will stay home to hold the food.
6. Hunters have 30 seconds to pick up yarn pieces one at a time. Hunters must bring a yarn piece back home before hunting another one.
7. After each group hunts, record the color and number of yarn pieces on the What's for Dinner? worksheet.
8. At the end of a session, compare colors and numbers among the four groups. Did some colors get eaten before others? Did other colors not get caught? Did group 1 gather more food than group 4?

What's for Dinner?



color	group 1	group 2	group 3	group 4
brown				
red				
green				
blue				
white				