

1. ANIMAL CHARADES

(20 MIN)

AIM: To think about how living things move and sound

AGES: Grades 1-7, max. 30 participants

SPACE: Anywhere dry

MATERIALS: Charade cards (30)

Activity: Get the kids to silently act out charades that include the name of the animal, which environment it's in, and what it's doing. (i.e. a snake slithering through grass).

2. NOAH'S ARK

(10 MIN)

AIM: To practice animal movements/sounds and recognize them; a fun way to split into groups

AGES: All ages

MATERIALS: Pairs of matching animal cards

SPACE: Anywhere dry

ACTIVITY: Give each kid the name of an animal that has a distinct movement or shape and have them find their partner. Make sure you have given out each animal twice so everyone has a pair. Have the kids find their animal pair without talking (they can make the animal's noise).

3. HUGATREE

(15 MIN)

AIM: To observe by touch

AGES: All ages, 20-30 participants (or less depending on age)

SPACE: In a forest or wooded area

MATERIALS: One blindfold for each pair

BEFORE YOU BEGIN: Partner everyone up

ACTIVITY: Blindfold one partner and have the other person lead them by a not-so-obvious SHORT route into the forest to a tree. The leader has the blindfolded person touch, smell, and familiarize themselves with the tree. Then the blindfolded person is led back to the start. The blindfold is removed and the person has to find which tree it was that they touched. Then the partners switch roles.

4. FEEL A ROCK

(15 MIN)

AIM: To observe with the senses other than sight

AGES: All ages

SPACE: Anywhere dry

MATERIALS: Rocks of different shapes and sizes, enough for each participant (or cones or leaves or any objects from nature)

ACTIVITY: Sit/stand everyone in a circle with their eyes closed. Hand a rock to each person, hands behind their backs. Allow them a couple minutes to get to know their rock by feeling. Then collect the rocks. The players pass the rock around the circle behind their backs. When they find their rock they keep it, but continue to pass the other rocks around the circle until everyone thinks they have found their rock. OR when they find their rock, they step back out of the circle. Can everyone find the correct rock? (Variation: use a cone or any other object such as a shell from nature).

5. RAINBOW COLOURS

(15 MIN)

AIM: To realize diversity of details in creation

AGES: Grades 1-7, max. 5 groups of 5

SPACE: Outdoors; it works well as a 'travelling' game along a path

MATERIALS: Laminated paint colour samples

ACTIVITY: Have the kids try to match all the colours in the paint colour samples to colours in the landscape. Let living things rest where they are. For active groups you might choose to hand out only a small selection of paint samples at a time and once the kids have run and found examples of these colours they can run back to you and get another one. Make it a race to see who gets through all their (or their team's) colours first.

OR Tell a story first as follows (or your own variation): Long ago, before there was colour in the world, a child is walking one day, and looking at everything—black and white everywhere they look, everything is black and white (trees, rivers, flowers). As the child watches, they see an eagle flying high up into the sky. The child notices a big rainbow up in the sky (ask what colours are in a rainbow). The eagle flies higher and higher until suddenly, it crashes into a rainbow in the sky. The child watches the rainbow shatter into little pieces, all the colours of the rainbow falling down out of the sky – violet, indigo, blue, green, red, orange, yellow

(throw the paint sample 'raindrops' into the air, and let them fall). As the rainbow pieces came down, they gave the world colours – the trees were green, the sky blue, the flowers all different colours! Now ask the children to gather up 'Rainbow Bits' and tell them to go and try and find things in a given area that match those rainbow colours.

6. CRAB SOCCER (variation: move like different creatures) (20 MIN)

AIM: Learn how a creature moves!

AGES: Grades 4-12, two teams of six or more players each

SPACE: Gym or meadow

MATERIALS: Soccer ball or beach ball, pylons or other goal markers, gloves to protect hands, pinnies to identify teams.

ACTIVITY: Follow the general rules of regular soccer – except you must assume the crab position (hands and feet on the ground, stomach facing up). You may strike the ball with your hands or feet to pass and score, but you must remain in the crab position from start to finish. Add to the fun by having a “crabby” leader who calls for the crab or reverse crab position at intervals throughout the game. The reverse crab position is on your hands and feet with your stomach facing the ground.

Note: To reduce wrist fatigue, use a smaller area, introduce rest intervals, or alternate this game with another game every 10-15 minutes.

7. RE-NAMING (15 MIN)

AIM: To observe closely the characteristics of an object, engaging the imagination

AGES: Any age

SPACE: Any space large enough for the group to sit

MATERIALS: Any natural object at hand (cone, clover, leaf, etc.)

ACTIVITY: Pass the object around the circle, and each person re-names it as what it reminds them of: i.e. a clover leaf might look like an umbrella, a mushroom, a mouse nose and ears, etc. Keep going until you run out of ideas! (A second time around the circle with the same object is very challenging).

8. MINI-HABITATS

(20 MIN)

AIM: To observe and identify components of a habitat

AGES: Any age

SPACE: Area with mixed 'life'

MATERIALS: Strings tied into a circle, pencil & paper

ACTIVITY: Place the circle string on the ground, and observe what is encircled from eye level. Observe and identify if possible all the kinds of life in the habitat (plant, insect, animal-in the ground, on the ground, above the ground) If time allows, do several different habitats and compare the kinds of life found in them.

VARIATION: MINI-PARK

AIM: Close observation of natural habitats, engage the imagination

SPACE: Any area with variation of growth.

ACTIVITY: Choose a small area (mini-habitat) of terrain and imagine a park there. Designate parts of your mini area for different park purposes (i.e. swings, skateboard area, climbing area, etc.). At the end, show the group and explain your layout.

9. WHOAMI?

(15-20 MIN)

AIM: To get to know creatures and practice communication

AGES: Grades 4-9, 10-15 participants

SPACE: Anywhere

MATERIALS: Laminated creature identity cards with name, picture and description of habits of creatures, clothespins, pencil and journals.

ACTIVITY: Clip a laminated picture of a creature to the back of each kid and have them go to each other to ask questions in order to determine the identity of the creature on their backs. The questions they ask should be answered by “yes” or “no” and they may ask only two questions in a row from one person.

ADDITIONAL: Have them draw a picture of what they think their animal looks like. When they've finished the picture and everyone is done, they can see how close their pictures come to reality.

SUGGESTED TYPES OF QUESTIONS:

- Do I have 4/6/8 legs?
- Do I have wings?
- Do I live under water? on the surface of the water?
- Do I eat plants/other animals/dead stuff (detritus)?
- Am I this big?

10. UN-NATURE TRAIL

(15 MIN)

AIM: To understand camouflage, visual awareness

AGES: Any age

SPACE: A section of trail 40-50' long

ACTIVITY: Along the trail, hide 10-15 man-made objects. Some should really stand out, like light bulbs or balloons. The rest should blend in and be more difficult to spot. People go the length of the trail spotting but not removing objects. At the end of the trail they whisper to you how many objects they saw. If no-one found them all, then have them go back and see if they can find the rest. Talk about animal colouration/ camouflage strategies. Go on a short hunt for small camouflaged creatures (insects, spiders).

11. CAMOUFLAGE

(15-20 MIN)

AIM: To appreciate how well animals blend into their environment

AGES: All ages, 5-30 participants

SPACE: Outdoors in a forest or wooded area

ACTIVITY: Choose one person to be the predator and have them count to 30 while everyone else hides nearby. The kids in hiding must be able to SEE the predator from where they hide (consistently-not just poking their head out sporadically). They are the prey animals; once the count is up no one should move, not even the predator. The winner is the prey who is able to hide closest to the predator without being seen. Once the predator has found all the prey possible in the first round, then they cover their eyes and count to 10. Prey must re-hide within that time CLOSER than their first spot. Predator tries to spot them again. This is a game you can play a number of times with different predators. Talk in between rounds about what the best way to hide is, and what factors effect good "hiding," i.e. colour, being low down, screening, holding still; variety of light/shadow).

12. FOREST INCENSE

(15 MIN)

AIM: To observe by smell

AGES: All ages, 20-30 participants

SPACE: Outdoors: beach, wooded area, forest

MATERIALS: Plastic containers such as film canisters

ACTIVITY: Have each person take a plastic container into the environment to collect objects with interesting smells. Emphasize that the kids must only take small samples, not to cause huge damage to anything living. The point is for each person to create

a smell that represents the forest with the objects. Have the kids name their newly-created incense and share it with others. You could get the kids to pass the containers around in a circle with everyone's eyes closed until they think theirs has returned to them (have them hold onto the one they've identified as their own, but keep passing the other containers until everyone feels he has his back again). Then see who can identify their own incense.

13. SENSORY MAP

(15 MIN)

AIM: To observe surroundings using all senses

AGES: Grades 4-9

SPACE: Outdoors in a "wild" place

MATERIALS: Paper and pencils

ACTIVITY: In the forest, give everyone a piece of paper and pencil. Get them to spread out from each other but not out of your range. Instruct them to mark an 'X' on the paper to represent where they are. Have them make up pictures, symbols, and words for all the things they sense around them – whether by sound, sight, smell, or touch. Come back together and discuss their 'maps'. Did it cause them to observe better?

14. SCAVENGER HUNT

(20 MIN)

AIM: Discover variety of life in nature, competition

AGES: Grades 1-8, max. 14 groups of 5 participants

SPACE: At the seashore, low tide (in the forest, in the meadow, etc.)

MATERIALS: Prize, lists of objects, crayon/pencil

BEFORE YOU BEGIN: Set up time limit and find a prize for the winning group.

ACTIVITY: Divide into groups with one leader in each group. Each group gets a scavenger list, and must work as a team. When items on the list are found, the leader will check them off with a crayon. The kids aren't to collect living things, only to observe them and their location, then check them off. Have each group make a pile of all their non-living objects at some central area where you can oversee. When the time limit you've set is up, score them two points for each thing they've found, and you may deduct points for counter-Creation behaviour! To make it more interesting, you can give them points for reasonable facsimiles of items they don't find (i.e. if they point out a crow to their leader but no eagle, they get one point, not two.).

15. TIE-DYE EXPRESSION

(2 SESSIONS)

AIM: To investigate uses and effects of plant materials

AGES: Grades 4-12

SPACE: Session 1: in the forest, Session 2 could be indoors

MATERIALS: Buckets for collecting natural materials in, large spoons, pots for boiling plant materials to make dyes (access to stove), pre-washed or even boiled material such as cotton t-shirts/socks, etc. for dyeing, string, salt or vinegar as fixer for dye, outdoor clothesline for drying dyed material on.

ACTIVITY: Collect different plant materials: leaves, flowers, berries, bark (from fallen trees). Identify plants (using a local plant identification guide). Boil in a large pot for at least an hour to create dye. Make sure you've added enough water and plants for the amount of material you'll be dyeing. Prepare t-shirts or material for dyeing (fold, twist, etc. and tie tightly with string – have fun experimenting). Soak material in dye buckets at least one hour, or overnight. Rinse with a fixer (salt or vinegar). Untie string and admire designs!! Document which plant materials create which colours of dye!

***Note: Natural dyes are not as bright or colourfast as commercial dyes. This is a learning process, so don't be disappointed if you don't get what you expect. Enjoy the subtle colours, and try again! (Hint: dark berries probably give the brightest colour).*

16. SURVIVAL TEA

(10 + 5 MIN)

AIM: To tantalise your taste buds, learn about local native plants

AGES: Up to 15 people, age 10 and up

SPACE: Forest

THINGS YOU'LL NEED: One burner camp stove, matches, pot, mugs, hot water in a water bottle, berries, leaves, peeled stick for stirring, plant/berry identification cards or guidebooks.

*** BEFORE YOU BEGIN:** Talk about wild berries- not all are edible – but most are. Identify ones in the area. Show them how to form a thimbleberry leaf cone for collecting cups.

ACTIVITY: Collect berries and leaves into the thimbleberry cups, and add to boiling water. Let steep for 10-30 minutes. Good berries to use: salal, Oregon grape, red huckleberry, blackberry, black raspberry, thimbleberry. Good leaves to use: blackberry, thimbleberry, salmonberry, black raspberry, mint, selfheal.

17. FREEZE IMPROV

(20 MIN)

AIM: To encourage critical thinking about environmental situations and ecological relationships

AGES: Grade 4 +

SPACE: Anywhere dry

MATERIALS: Imagination and enthusiasm

ACTIVITY: Have three kids volunteer to act out an animal or environmental issue scenario in front of a group. Given a few ideas from the audience (place, thing, person) have them start, but at any point someone in the audience can call out 'freeze' (to stop the action – actors stay in their positions) and jump into the scenario in place of one of the actors. The new person changes the scenario based on the idea for a new scenario he/she got while watching the actors' positions.

***SUGGESTED SCENARIOS:**

- A development company has bought a piece of land full of thick forest and wonderful animal habitat. You discover the trucks and bulldozers about to start work demolishing the beauty of this natural space.
- A man is washing his pride and joy – his car – in the driveway. Thick gobs of suds are being washed along the curb and draining into the storm sewer. You go to tell him that the soap is going into the creek and harming fish and life there.
- A home gardener, tired of fighting off the slugs, starts spreading slug poison around the garden. You go to suggest an alternative, which is ?
- You need to go the store, but are feeling lazy. You ask your mom to drive you over to get a Slurpee. She responds....

18. SPARROW SEEK

(15-20 MIN)

AIM: To observe how bird's feathers and colours can help camouflage themselves

AGES: 3+

SPACE: Any area with a variety of vegetation

MATERIALS: Outline of birds, crayons for colouring

ACTIVITY: Have everyone colour their bird shapes. Take the coloured bird shapes and have a helper hide them in the area while the group close their eyes. When you are finished hiding the birds get the children to look for them. In the conclusion, discuss what colours better help the birds to hide.

19. BUILD A TREE

(15 MIN)

AIM: Discover how a tree takes in water and nutrients

AGES: 5-11; max. 3 groups of 5 participants

SPACE: Place where children can spread out

MATERIALS: None

ACTIVITY: Choose children to represent tree roots, xylem, and phloem. Xylem are the nonliving part of the plant which carry water and minerals from the roots to the rest of the plant. Phloem are the living part of the plant which carry the sugar and other nutrients around the plant. The roots lie down on the ground with their heads facing outwards and feet touching to form a circle. The roots make a sipping/slurping noise to demonstrate how they suck water out of the ground and bring it to other parts of the plant. The xylem crouch down and then rise up to mimic the carrying up action (and make an appropriate "rising" noise). The phloem put their hands out and shake their hands making a wweeeeee sound. Add leaves, which swish in the wind (wind, rain, sun, flowers all can have a part too).

20. PICTURE FRAMING

(20 MIN)

AIM: To make observations of details in Creation.

AGES: Any

SPACE: Place where you can see a variety of life (seashore, forest, meadow).

MATERIALS: Plastic slide frame, magnifying lenses

ACTIVITY: Children use the plastic slide frame like a picture frame. The children will "frame" natural places they think would make a good picture. This is a tool to focus children and their observation of the natural surroundings.

21. OWLS & CROWS

(20 MIN)

AIM: To review the concepts covered by other activities

AGES: 8+; 6 or more per group

SPACE: Place where children can run around

MATERIALS: None

ACTIVITY: Divide the group into two equal teams, the Owls and Crows. Line up the two teams facing each other, about two feet apart. About 15 feet behind each team, mark a line for Home Base. The leader makes a statement aloud, and if the statement is true the Owls chase the Crows, trying to catch them before they reach their Home Base. The statements could be: A decidu-

ous tree keeps its leaves all year long, xylem carries nutrients up the plant, a sea star can replace a lost leg. If the statement is false, the Crows chase the Owls.

22. BIRD BEHAVIOUR HUNT

(25 MIN)

AIM: To make observations of birds and their behaviours

AGES: 8+; 10 people in pairs

SPACE: An area where birds are found

MATERIALS: Binoculars, if available

ACTIVITY: Talk about what a bird might do in a normal day (i.e. look for food, clean itself, check its territory, make a nest, look after its children). Divide into pairs. This activity needs the group to travel quietly through the forest. Suggest they find a spot where they can sit still and observe. Give the children about 10-15 minutes to look for birds in their area and observe what the birds are doing. Then gather and share what they saw.

23. DUPLICATION

(15 MIN.)

AIM: To make observations of details in Creation.

AGES: 8+; small group of 8

SPACE: Enough area to gather in a circle

MATERIALS: Pencil & paper, a tray of natural materials occurring in the area including rocks, leaf parts, moss etc.

ACTIVITY: Place the natural objects on the tray and put it in the middle of the circle. Give the children several minutes to examine the objects on the tray. Then the children will search for the same objects in the natural area around them. They will record on paper what objects they have found.

24. WEB OF LIFE

AIM: To see how all living things are interconnected

AGES: 8 +

SPACE: In/outdoor

MATERIALS: 1-2 foot lengths of cord (enough for 2 per participant)

ACTIVITY: Talk about the basis for life. What provides energy for all life on the earth? (sun) (give two cords, one in each hand, to the one who gives an answer) What living things get their energy/food from the sun? (plants) (Give one cord to each person following-they will hold one end of the previous person's cord, as well as the other in their other hand) What is a kind of plant? What eats that plant? Continue to ask questions which get the children

making connections between all these living things. Eventually, everyone in the group should be connected. Then introduce a scenario affecting the plant (i.e. someone puts weed killer on the plant). That person must sit down. Anyone who felt their cord tug also sits down. Continue this process. Everyone should end up sitting down, because they are all connected. Point out that the actions people take on the world might seem like the small things, but it affects very many sides of life and kinds of life.

25. OH DEER

(20 MIN)

AIM: To understand what habitat is, and how it affects living creatures

AGES: 9 +

SPACE: Large indoor/outdoor space

MATERIALS: None

ACTIVITY: Divide into two groups. Stand in lines facing each other. Designate one line as the deer. The other line represents the habitat needs of the deer. Introduce the symbols for habitat: food - hands on stomach; water - hands on mouth; space - hands above head in triangle shape. Introduce the concept of habitat: what a living creature needs to survive. Instruct lines to turn their backs to each other. On your signal, all will turn around making a symbol of their choice. The deer will run to other line to find someone making the same symbol. If they reach that person first, they take them back to their line (symbolizing reproduction). If no one is making their symbol, they die, and join the habitat line. Look at the deer line now. Has the balance changed? What might this do?

Play again. What is the balance like? Then before the next round, quietly tell the habitat line that there's a change (i.e. fire - no food or shelter) What will likely happen is that the deer population shrinks dramatically. Why? Deer are dependent on their natural surroundings for life! If some things are not available, they will die or not be able to reproduce. Talk about the ways humans might be responsible for some of those effects.

26. MAKE A POOTER (A pooter is a bug-catcher)

(20 MIN)

AIM: Easy facilitating of bug examination

AGES: 4+ (with a little help)

MATERIALS: 2 diameters of straws (cut in halves or thirds), masking tape, small squares of nylon stocking; film canisters or small plastic containers, magnifiers.

ACTIVITY: Put two straws of different sizes together with a little bit

of nylon between. Tape the middle so it doesn't slide apart, and you've got a handy dandy bug-catcher. You can suck a bug up the straw, but the nylon stops it from going into your mouth. Then you can gently blow into it, and put the bug into a container to look at more closely (before you let it go again). Have fun!

27. CREATURE MEMORY

(20 MIN)

AIM: Recognition and identification of living things, visual memory

AGES: Any

MATERIALS: Set of creature memory cards, made in pairs.

ACTIVITY: To begin play, put all the cards out in even rows on a table or flat surface, upside down. Each child gets a chance, in turn, to turn over any two cards. If those cards make a pair (matching), then they get another turn. If they do not match, they make sure everyone sees them, and then turn them over again. If you've made a match, you pick up and keep with you those cards. At the end of the game you can count all your pairs! The goal is to keep track of where the different pictures are so that when it comes to your turn you can make a MATCH! Try to identify all the creatures!

28. SECRET SPOT

(20 MIN)

AIM: Get to know a place intimately; observation; recording, writing, drawing skills

AGES: Any

MATERIALS: Journal or drawing paper, pencil

ACTIVITY: Find a special place you'd like to get to know. Get comfortable and spend at least 10-15 minutes there observing sounds, sights, smells. Do this daily or weekly or monthly until you feel you know it very well!

29. POND-ER

(20-30 MIN)

AIM: To learn about plant and other life in and around the pond

AGES: 4+; groups up to 10, max

SPACE: Ditch, river, pond or lakeshore, seashore

MATERIALS: Dish buckets, nets, laminated identification cards, magnifiers

****Note:** Special safety precautions must be taken near water. Make sure you have more than one adult supervising if deeper water. Have rescue assist equipment at hand.

SIMPLE NATURE ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS

ACTIVITY: Dipping. Have children dip into the water to discover what lives there. Fill dish buckets partly with water. Children can dip nets into the water and then tap [turn the net inside out as well] their 'net finds' gently into the buckets and examine further.

GRADES 4-7: Talk about invertebrates, and what their characteristics are (body parts, skeletons, how do they breathe, life cycles, etc.). Examine the surrounding habitat: Are there any birds or mammals which live around the water? Search for evidence (tracks, feathers, 'poop'). What kinds of plants live around the pond? Are they different from the plants in the forest? Why are they different? Compare. Are there amphibians here? Search around the ponds for amphibians.

