

Color Crazy

State Mandated Benchmarks and Standards

Grade Level: K-4

Subject Areas: Science, Language Arts, Expressive Arts, Environmental Education.

Key Terms: color, wildlife, camouflage, mimicry

Objective

Students will recognize and generalize that wildlife exists in many colors.

Method

Students create colorful representations of wild animals.

Materials

Pictures of brightly colored animals and insects; crayons; paint; chalk; construction paper; scissors; glue; other brightly colored materials such as feathers, tissue paper.

Background

Animals use coloring and markings as survival tools. For example, animals use color as protection and as a way to attract mates. The colors that humans see are not always the same colors that all animals see. An animal's bright colors may not be visible to its primary predators.

Camouflage, or the ability to blend with surroundings can determine whether a prey species, like a rabbit, remains hidden from a predator or is easily identified, killed, and eaten. Predators such as leopards and trout have camouflaged bodies so that their prey will not see them. Some animals go through seasonal color changes to remain camouflaged. For example, ptarmigans are ground-dwelling birds that live in arctic and alpine regions of the Northern Hemisphere. In winter, ptarmigans are white and blend with the color of snow. In summer, they turn mottled brown and resemble the color of the alpine forest during that time of year.

Many animals are brightly colored. The eastern newt in its land-dwelling juvenile, or eft, stage is a bright red salamander. The red color warns predators that the newt's skin contains a compound that can be toxic or irritating to the predator. A predator that eats

a newt learns to avoid newts in the future. Bright colors or other markings also may serve as a defense. Some animals use color to appear to be something that they are not. Polyphemus moths have giant eye spots that create the impression that the animal is larger than it really is. Color also plays a roll in animal mating rituals. The brightly colored male scarlet tanager and peacock both use color to attract mates.

Wildlife exists in a wide range of colors that are linked to their survival.

Procedure

1. Open the discussion by asking students to name and describe real, brightly colored animals. Show students photographs of a variety of brightly colored animals. Discuss how the animals' colors and markings might help them survive.

2. Ask the students to use the brightly colored materials to create a colorful creature. This creature could be a real wild animal. The students can make birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects, fish, and mammals – whatever animal they would like. Have the students describe how the coloring on the animal would help it to survive.

3. Make a "Colorful Wildlife Gallery". Post the animal creations in the classroom, nature center, or other area in the building.

4. Develop a vocabulary list that is based on the students' descriptions of the animals.

5. Ask the students what they have learned about wild animals. Encourage the generalization that wild animals occur in a wide variety of colors and that animals' colors and markings help them survive.

Evaluation

1. Identify a wild animal that is red or has red markings on its body. Identify two wild animals that are brown or have brown markings on their bodies. Identify one animal that is yellow or has yellow markings, on that is blue or has blue

markings, and two that are green or have green markings on their bodies.

2. Create a model or picture of a colorful butterfly or moth and place it in the room. Explain how the colors will help it survive.

Explain where in the room its chances for survival would probably be the best.



Card Wildlife Education Center

Adapted from: Project Wild. Houston: Council for Environmental Education. 2005
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