

# The Un-nature Trail

*Adapted from Sharing nature with Children*

## Aims and Goals

To understand the difference between natural and unnatural things **by** hiding objects camouflaged by nature.

## Information

In nature, color, shape, and patterns are not only used to hide predator and prey from each other, they are also used to warn predators that something does not taste good and eating it is not a good idea. One example of this would be to let birds know when fruit is ripe. The plant doesn't benefit if the bird eats the fruit before the seeds are ready.

## Words to Know

camouflage, predator, prey

## Tools

Provided: 16 to 24 man-made objects. Some of these objects will stand out, like brightly colored balloons or fluorescent pink cockroaches. Other objects will blend with their surroundings, and therefore be more difficult to pick out. Books and pictures showing camouflage.

Keep the number of planted objects a secret.

## How

1. Before the activity begins, set a trail. Make sure a 65 to 100 foot section of trail is wide enough for two people to pass. Mark the start of the trail. Place the objects at intervals along the trail. Some could be very obvious others could be hung from a tree or far away. All the objects need to be visible from the path. Mark the end of the trail. Note the kind of objects and how many of them you placed on the trail.
2. As an introduction, talk about ways animals use camouflage. Show pictures of animals hiding in plain site.
3. Explain to the class that they are going on an "Un-nature Trail." Normally you would go on a nature trail to look for animals and plants, which belong and live in that habitat. However, on this trail students will be looking for unnatural things, which do not belong here. Some may be difficult to see so they must look carefully.
4. Set them off singly or in pairs, or in small groups, far enough apart so that they cannot see what the group in front has spotted. The trail should be long enough so that everyone can be on the trail at once. It might be helpful to ask half the group to begin along the middle of

the trail, and then come back and finish the first half. This way no one has to wait in line too long.

5. When students reach the end of the trail, they whisper in your ear how many objects they spotted. Tell each child the total number of objects. Encourage the children to walk the trail again, looking for any objects they've missed.

**Adaptation:** If you want to make it easier for the players, place a marker near the objects that are the hardest to find.

## Wrap Up

1. To allow everyone to see where the objects were hidden, go to the beginning of the trail, and start walking along the rope, and have the players point out the objects as you go by each one. Count out the number of objects found as you go along.
2. End the game with a discussion of the ways camouflage coloration helps animals. Guide the discussion with these questions:
  - Which objects were the easiest to spot? Why?
  - Which objects were the hardest to spot? Why?
  - Was just color important or did shape matter too?
  - What makes an object look out of place?
  - What makes an object very visible in its surroundings?
4. Go on a search for small camouflaged animals (insects, spiders, etc.).