

# Games

## → *High Energy Games*

### Sharks and Minnows

*Materials:* You will need an outdoor area with two boundaries, or safe zones, designated on each side (set up like a football field, but a shorter distance).

*Procedure:*

- Choose one or two students to be sharks. Their job is to tag the minnows as they run from one safe zone to another.
- All the minnows will start in one safe zone, and will have to run to the other safe zone on your cue.
- If a shark tags a minnow, the minnow becomes an anemone and must stand in one spot with their feet together, but may tag minnows that run past them.
- You will make a statement out loud, and the minnows must run if that statement applies to them. For example “Minnows swim if you are wearing green.”
- This game can also be used to review things you have seen or done that day, for example “Minnows swim if you saw a crab today.”
- The last two remaining minnows become the new sharks.

### Survival

*Procedure:*

- Before beginning, discuss what animals need to survive (food, shelter, water).
- Choose about 1/3 of the group to be animals, the rest of the students will be resources.
- Have the animals line up about 10 feet away from the resources, they should be in two lines facing each other.
- Decide on motions to represent food, shelter and water. For example, rub your stomach for food, put your hands over your head in a triangle as shelter, and pretend to drink out of a cup for water.
- Everyone will turn their backs to one another and choose a resource; the resources decide what they are going to be and the animals decide what they need.
- Instruct everyone to turn around and face each other while making their resource motion.
- The animals will run to the resources and find what they need, gently grabbing them by the arm and taking them to the animal side. Only one animal can claim each resource.
- The animals that did not get a resource die and decompose, becoming resources.
- Continue until you have seen both extremes of the cycle (a few animals with lots of resources, and lots of animals with few resources)
- To burn more energy, place the lines further apart

*Discussion:* Before the game, discuss animals’ basic need for survival. During the game, discuss the patterns are seeing. Make predictions about what will happen next. What happens when there are a few animals and plenty of resources? What happens when there are a lot of animals and not enough resources?

# Games

## **Crab Tag**

### *Procedure:*

- A chaotic game, but fun
- Every student starts as a crab with two claws – they will need to defend themselves against other crabs while competing for food and space
- They must run around amongst the other crabs and *lightly* “pinch” each others arms (by using their whole hand as a crab claw)
- If a student gets pinched they lose their claw and must put that arm behind their back
- If a students loses both claws they are defenseless and have no way to eat and so they die
- As students start to fade out, yell “regenerate” and all the crabs missing claws can grow them back and re-enter the game
- This is a hard game to regulate, make sure to define boundaries and talk about the honesty policy

*Discussion:* Talk about the stresses on the life of a crab. Was it easy to survive with one claw? The healthier crabs are more successful then the injured crabs, who have a hard time defending themselves.

## **Octopus Tag**

### *Procedure:*

- Played like a regular tag game with one “it” but if you are part of an octopus you are safe from being tagged
- An octopus is four people standing in a single file line, waving there arms around like octopus tentacles
- You can only join an octopus by connecting to the front of the line
- When this happens the last person in the line is cut loose and free to be tagged

# Games

## → *Low Energy Games*

### **Bat and Moth**

*Materials:* A Blindfold

*Procedure:* (Like Marco Polo)

- Have the students stand in a circle. Choose one student to be a bat, and one to be a moth. These two will be in the middle of the circle.
- Blindfold the bat and explain they will have to find their prey using their sense of hearing. To make the game harder you can also blindfold the moth.
- When the bat says “bat” the moth must respond by saying “moth” in order to imitate echolocation.
- The students making up the circle should hold hands, and warn the bat when he or she gets to close by saying “tree.”
- (Substitute Dolphin and Fish for an ocean themed echolocation game)

*Discussion:* Use this game to teach students about echolocation. Bats do not have very good sight, and they hunt at night. In order to find their food, they make high-pitched noises. The sound bounces off nearby objects and returns to the bats ears (an echo). They use the sound that returns to find where their prey is. Was this easy to do as a human? Where there any techniques that made finding the moth easier (such as saying bat more often).

### **Ark, Bark, Snark (A Sea Lion Game)**

*Materials:* Pre-made Ark, Bark, Snark cards

*Preparation:* On index cards write words that rhyme with ark, bark, and snark. You will need two of each word, and enough cards for each student to get one.

*Procedure:*

- Hand out the ark, bark, snark cards and have students read them silently (for younger students help them read the word)
- When you say go, they must start saying their word
- They will need to walk around and find the person saying the same word as them

*Discussion:* This game should accompany a lesson on marine mammals. The arks, barks, and snarks represent the special call that sea lions use to identify their young. In a rookery, there are many sea lions raising their young on the same beach. When mothers come back from hunting in the ocean they find their young based on the sound of their call, which can be difficult on a crowded beach.

# Games

## Steal the Trash (a variation of steal the bacon)

*Materials:* You will need a prop to represent the trash, such as a brown paper bag, or a water bottle.

*Procedure:*

- The students will be raccoons (or ravens, or skunks) and you, or the “it” is a careless person who left their lunch sitting on the ground.
- The raccoons must line up about at least 15 feet away, make sure to mark a boundary. They will have to sneak up on you only while your back is turned to try and get the trash that is sitting next to your feet.
- Turn your back and count to three, the raccoons can only *walk in normal sized steps* toward you while your back is turned. It helps to have another adult judging, if they run jump or skip they must go back to the start.
- When you turn around they must freeze, if you catch them moving they must go back to the start.
- Once the animals get close enough they must try to steal your trash and hide it from you as they make their way back to the start.
- Continue with the same procedure, counting to three and turning around. But as soon as the trash is missing, you get to guess who has the trash once every time you turn towards them.
- In order to hide the trash, the students should now have their backs turned to you. If you call their name they must show you their hands to prove they don’t have it.
- Every time you count, the trash must switch hands. The students should be working as a group to get it back to the start; everyone should make an effort to appear as though they have the trash in order to fool you. I
- If you guess the correct person, they must return the trash and everyone starts over. If they make it back to the start line, they win.

## Animal on my Back

*Materials:* Pictures of animals, tape or clothespins

*Procedure:*

- Attach a picture of an animal to each person’s back.
- They will need to ask yes and no questions in order to find out what they are.
- There are a couple ways to do this game
  - One at a time: Have a student stand in front with their back to the group (so everyone can see the picture) and allow them 20 Yes or No questions before they have to guess their animal.
  - Everyone at once: Explain the directions first and then set students free to ask each other Yes or No questions. Allow them to only ask each person one question, and then move onto the next person.

# Games

## Eagles Eye

*Materials:* A quarter, A prop (A stuffed animal, or a water bottle will work)

*Procedure:*

- Split the students into two even teams. Have them sit cross-legged facing each other, and holding hands along each line.
- Between the two lines at one end there will be someone flipping a quarter, at the other end there will be a prop to grab.
- The students nearest the quarter flipper are the head of the line, and they are the eyes of the team. Everyone else will have his or her eyes closed.
- The students at the end of the line will be the talons of the team; their job is to grab the prop.
- The quarter flipper will flip the quarter. If it lands on tails, the eyes will squeeze the hand they are holding. When the final person feels the squeeze they can open their eyes and grab for the prop. Whoever grabs first scores a point for their team.
- The talons that grabbed first will move to the head of the line as everyone scoots down.
- If there is a false grab (a grab on a heads) that team must move backwards – the eyes will have to go to the end.
- Whichever team moves all the way through their line first is the winning team.
- To make this game more nature-focused, consider each team a bird of prey. Let them choose what bird and come up with a team name. The predator with the sharpest eyesight and fastest reflexes will be the one to catch the prey.

## Bump

*Procedure:*

- An easy game to keep students entertained while walking somewhere.
- The group must walk in a single file line.
- The line leader (an adult) will occasionally stop unexpectedly. Everyone in the line must also stop.
- If someone bumps into the person in front of them, everyone that sees or feels it yells “bump” and whoever bumped must go to the back of the line.

## Habitat Charades

*Procedure:*

- Split the group into teams of about 5 or 6
- Each team is going to be a habitat. Each team will need to decide what habitat they will be and assign parts. They should have some of the key components: a primary producer (plant), an herbivore, a predator, and an abiotic component (such as rocks, sun, sand, or wind, or water).
- After each team has had a practice run of acting out their habitat, bring the whole group together again.
- Have each team act out their habitat while the rest of the group guesses what they are
- *Example:* To act out a Desert, the players could be the sun, a cactus, a tumbleweed, a lizard, and a coyote.

# Games

## Food Chain

### *Procedure:*

- Before getting started, create a food chain on the board, or if you are outside discuss a food chain that might exist in that area
- *Example:* Phytoplankton, zooplankton, anchovy, salmon, sea lion, great white shark
- Identify motions for each level of the food chain – for example, if your primary producer is phytoplankton, spread your arms out and act as though you are floating around and collecting sunlight
- Everyone will start at the first level of the food chain
- Find another person at the same level as you and play “rock, paper, scissors”
- The winner moves up to the next level
- To move up the food chain you must find someone at the same level – zooplankton can only compete with other zooplankton

*Discussion:* Before the game starts, students should be familiar with the idea of food chains and food webs. The primary producers (plants) are important because they fix energy from the sunlight, which provides the foundation for the food chain/web. This game represents a chain because there is a fixed path. To discuss the difference between a food chain and food web, ask the students what else might eat plankton, or anchovies. These plants and animals are an important food source for many other animals, not just one. If you drew a food chain to begin, you can add in these extra characters to show how they are interconnected.

# Games

## → *Observational Games*

### **Duplication Scavenger Hunt**

*Materials:* A handkerchief, natural items collected on site

*Procedure:*

- An easy spur of the moment game to play when outside.
- While students are occupied with something else (lunch or snack time maybe) collect 5-10 nature objects that are in the area (e.g. a flower, a pinecone, a blackberry, etc.).
- Place the items under a handkerchief and have the students gather around.
- Explain that they will have 10 seconds to look at the items under the handkerchief, and then they will have to go find them.
- Uncover the items and slowly count to ten, then cover them back up.
- Let students roam the area and try to find everything they saw. Give them a time limit and some boundaries.
- Gather everyone together again and uncover the items. Go through each and ask “who found a pinecone?” and so on.

*Adapted from Sharing Nature with Children by Joseph Cornell*

### **Slippers for Salamanders**

*Materials:* Index Cards and a pen

*Preparation:* On index cards, write the following phrases, or make up some of your own: Slippers for Salamanders, Top Hat for a Tarantula, Hoola Hoop for a Snake, Boat for a Beetle, Eyeglasses for an Owl, Couch for a Cat, Raincoat for a Rabbit, Tea Cup for a Hummingbird, Umbrella for a Frog, Toilet Paper for a Tadpole, Blanket for a Butterfly, Chair for a Chipmunk, Skateboard for a Skunk, Hammock for a Hare, Table for a Treefrog, Newspaper for a Newt, Baseball Cap for a Bird, Toothbrush for a Turtle, Floss for a Fly, Plate for a Porcupine.

*Procedure:*

- This game should be played outside, preferably in a forest where there is plenty of natural debris on the ground.
- Explain to the students that you will be going on a scavenger hunt, but they will need to use their imaginations to find these things.
- Hand out the cards and have students search for the items.
- Set boundaries, and let students know that they can pick small plants that are plentiful (make sure it's ok to do this in the nature area you are in).
- When everyone has returned with their items, circle up and share what you found.

### **Camera**

*Materials:* Index cards, Pencils or Crayons.

# Games

(Optional Materials: String, Clothespins, and Dixie cups for a nature art showing)

*Procedure:*

- Have each student find a partner, and decide who will be the photographer and who will be the camera.
- The camera will close their eyes and the photographer will *carefully* lead the camera to a good picture spot.
- The photographer should position the camera so that their head is facing what they want to take a picture of. You can take a close-up detail shot, or a landscape. It helps to let the camera know which it will be.
- Once the camera is in place, take a picture by tapping them twice on the shoulder. The camera will open their eyes for five seconds while taking a mental image of what they are seeing. The photographer will tap once to have the camera close their eyes.
- Give each camera some film (an index card and a pencil or crayons) and have them develop (draw) the picture.
- Have each pair take turns being the camera and photographer so everyone gets a chance to draw.

*Variations:* Have the photographer choose a theme and take three or four pictures. The camera can then try to guess the theme. Or, have the photographer take on picture and then lead the camera back to the start. Then have the camera, with their eyes open, try to find the spot where the picture was taken.

*Extension:* You can show off all the “photos” with a nature art showing. Use a string and clothespins to hang the art between two trees. Mix some smell cocktails by putting smelly plants in Dixie cups and sniffing them while enjoying the art.

*Adapted from Sharing Nature with Children II by Joseph Cornell*

## **ABC I Spy**

*Procedure:*

- A very simple game, fun to play while walking somewhere.
- Work together as a group to “spy” something that starts with the letter A.
- Next something that starts with B, then C, and so on.
- It has to be a “thing” not an action or description, and whoever spots it should point it out to the group.

## **Recommended Reading**

Cornell, Joseph (1979). *Sharing Nature with Children*. Nevada City, Ca: Dawn Publications.

Cornell, Joseph (1989). *Sharing the Joy of Nature with Children*. Nevada City, Ca: Dawn Publications. (The most recent version is titled *Sharing Nature with Children II*)