



Herts and Middlesex



Wildlife Watch

## Camouflage Caterpillars!

### Background information

For insects and animals that are prey species (i.e. are eaten by predators) it is important to have ways of avoiding being eaten. Many animals use camouflage as one way to escape from predators, blending into their surroundings and not standing out.

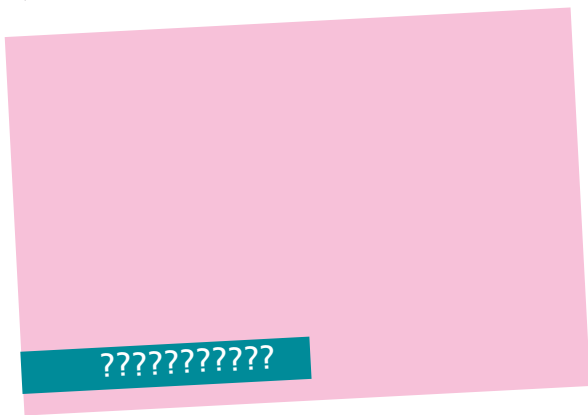
### Activity objectives

This game aims to teach children about camouflage and how insects such as caterpillars use this to avoid being eaten by birds. It should show them how camouflage works and why many animals have evolved this method of avoiding predators.

This game can also be used to explain why some animals do the exact opposite and are brightly coloured or patterned in order to frighten off predators, show they are poisonous or mimic another poisonous animal.

### What you will need

1. A tree/shrub with lots of low branches. (This activity works best in spring/summer when there are leaves on the trees).
2. Pipe cleaners of various colours cut into 10cm lengths. These should include some dark coloured ones particularly greens and browns as well as some brightly coloured ones.
3. One or two mats to kneel/sit on (optional).



Now turn over...



and play the game!





## Camouflage Caterpillars!

### How to play

1. Prior to the session, attach the pipe cleaners to twigs/branches on the tree (all within reaching height of the children).

**Top tip!** Remember to count how many pipe cleaners you put out so you can make sure they all get collected at the end!

2. One adult (or two if it's a big class) need to pretend to be baby birds. It's easiest if you can kneel/sit on the floor whilst the game is in progress.

3. Tell the children that they are the parent birds and need to find "caterpillars" (pipe cleaners) to feed the baby birds.

4. Ask them to go to the tree, find a "caterpillar" and bring it back to feed the baby bird. Tell them they have to do this quickly as baby birds need feeding every few minutes– however they are only allowed to collect one caterpillar at a time!

**\*\*** Tell them to watch out for twigs/branches that might poke them in the eye.



5. As the children bring the caterpillars back, line them up in the order they bring them back. This should end up being mostly bright colours first with the green/brown colours towards the end.

6. After all the caterpillars have been found, gather the group together.

7. Ask if they notice any difference between the caterpillars collected first and the ones collected towards the end.

8. Discuss why it might be beneficial to be a darker coloured caterpillar.

**\*\*** See follow up for further discussion points below.

### Follow up

1. Discuss the advantage of being camouflaged.

2. Discuss why some animals might be brightly coloured and why this might be an advantage.

3. Research what other methods some caterpillars use to deter predators.

4. Discuss mimicry – some caterpillars and other animals adopt bright colours and patterns to mimic poisonous animals even though they aren't poisonous themselves.

5. Ask the children to design their own caterpillars – one that is well camouflaged and one that is brightly coloured to deter predators.

### Information for Teachers

#### National Curriculum Links

**Y2 POS** Identify that most living things live in habitats to which they are suited.

**Y6 POS** Identify how animals are adapted to suit their environment in different ways and that adaptation may lead to evolution.

