

Can You See Me?



Objective

Students will understand how animals that live in the ocean can camouflage themselves for protection.

Background

Animals that live in the ocean face many predators. Most of these animals have at least one way to camouflage themselves from these predators. However, many predators have learned how to approach their prey without being seen. Fish such as flounder, are colored and shaped to appear as part of their surrounding habitat. Some fish can even change their color to blend in with their surroundings. This is called "mimicry of surrounding". Jellyfish have a transparent body which makes them difficult for other animals to see. The coloration of the clown fish is helpful for its coral reef habitat. This type of camouflage is called "disruptive coloration". Dolphins have a lighter color on their ventral (under) side and a darker color on their dorsal (top) side. If seen from above, they blend with the darker water and

the bottom of the ocean floor. If seen from below, they blend with the light from the sky. This is called countershading and "cryptic coloration".

Materials Needed

- Colored construction paper
- Wax paper
- Clear plastic sheets
- Crayons and markers
- Scissors

Activity

1. Divide students into groups of 3 (depending on size of class)
2. Each group makes 12 of its own fish out of construction paper, wax paper, and plastic sheets. Fish can be colored differently. Do not color the plastic fish.
3. Each group looks around the classroom for a location to place their fish.
4. The other groups leave the room and the remaining group places their fish around the classroom. Fish should be in plain view, and not under objects. (You can also section off an area where the fish will be placed.)
5. The other groups are allowed back inside the room and they have two to three minutes to "hunt" for the fish.
6. Keep track of who finds the most fish, the student who finds the most fish is the winner.

Discuss how it was easier to find some of the fish than others. The plastic fish should be the hardest since it can easily blend in with objects. The wax paper fish should be the second hardest because they are more transparent than colored construction paper. The colorful fish may be difficult to find if they blend in with

objects around them. This demonstrates the importance of "camouflaging" and counter shading for these animals.