

Through an active game, learners will understand the pressures on animals to survive in their habitats. They will be able to contrast the ability of a prey animal to avoid predators, and conversely, how a predator can succeed.

Materials/Setup

- Pictures of snowshoe hares and lynx – these can be placed in lanyards for students to wear around their necks, or taped to their shirts
- If playing indoors, set up different areas of the room to represent different habitat types

Activity Location

- This activity is designed for the outdoors – it works best when played in several different habitats and when played with older students
- Look for an area that has a variety of habitats; dense forest, open field, no undergrowth, hilly areas, etc.
- *Indoor adaptation – set up areas in the classroom/gym to represent different habitats; the “forest of chairs,” the “gym mat trees,” the open field (open space in the middle of the room) – this adaptation works better with younger students*

Introduction

- In order for this game to work, the students must comply to the rules put in place to ensure their safety. Explain to the students that they will be playing a game, but they **MUST** listen to the rules before the game commences
- Explain that they will each be representing a type of animal that lives in the forest. All animals need food, water and shelter in their habitat, but they also need some kind of special adaptation to avoid predators or to catch prey.
- Introduce the term “adaptation.” Adaptation means that the animals have something special on their body (they are equipped with it) or they behave in a special way in order to survive.
- Hold up the picture of the snowshoe hare. Draw out the special adaptation the snowshoe hare possesses from the students. Their fur changes colours with the seasons, which allows them to camouflage with their surroundings to avoid predators. They also have huge back feet, which allows them to easily move across the top of the deep snow drifts and launch themselves

forward quickly. And they have the ability to sit very still when they are feeling threatened, in the hopes that their camouflage will keep them hidden.

- Hold up a picture of the lynx. The lynx's number one favoured prey is the snowshoe hare. Lynx have excellent eyesight, which allows them to see great distances. They are also very patient – they will sit on a high spot in the forest and scan with their eyes until they see a snowshoe hare twitch. Lynx also are equipped with large paws, relative to their body size, which allows them to also maneuver on top of snow.

Action (Game Play)

1. Explain to the students that they will represent the snowshoe hares (if giving them lanyards, make sure each student has one to wear).
2. You (the teacher) will represent the lynx.
3. The lynx says the word "camouflage." That is the hares' clue to run and try to find a place to hide in their habitat.
4. The hares must stay within 15 steps of the lynx. If they are farther than 15 steps, they are disqualified (this ensures that students stay close and don't run away!).
5. The lynx will cover their eyes and count slowly to 10. At the end of the count, the lynx will uncover their eyes and use their keen vision to try to find the hares.
6. The lynx is not allowed to move – they have to stay standing in one place. They can turn in a circle, but are not allowed to take a step in any direction.
7. If the lynx sees a hares' leg (shoe, hat, shoulder, etc) sticking out, they can describe that person and that counts as "being eaten."
8. The hare who was spotted must come and stand by the lynx. It is important that they don't point out other hares that are still camouflaged.
9. Once the lynx has seen all of the hares they can see, they say "okay snowshoe hares, show yourselves!"
10. The hares must stand up in their hiding place, but not leave it. The lynx will judge a winner by seeing who is the closest hare that remained hidden.
11. Play several rounds to give every student the opportunity to be the winner.

Conclusion/Wrap up

For Older Students (Grades SK-2):

Play the first few rounds of this game in an area that has a lot of hiding places (dense forest). This will give the students a false sense of security. They will feel like the game is really easy, and that snowshoe hares have should have no trouble finding a hiding place in the forest. At the end of this round, ask the students how they felt about this habitat. Was it easy to hide?

For the next round, take the students to a field habitat. Ask the students how they feel about hiding in this habitat. Are there any places to hide? Change the rules for

this round and explain that because there is nothing to hide behind, the hares must now rely on their camouflage. They have to hold perfectly still, and if they so much as twitch, the lynx will get them.

Try several different habitat types and ask the students following each one how easy/difficult it was to hide. At the end of the game, have the students think about how difficult it must be to be the prey vs the predator.

A reflective exercise is an excellent post-activity with guiding questions like:

- Which habitat provided the best cover for the hare? Does this also benefit the lynx?
- What did this exercise teach you about predator/prey relationships?
- What special adaptations does a snowshoe hare possess?
- What special adaptations does a lynx possess?

For Younger Students (PreSchool-JK)

This is really just a glorified game of hide-and-go-seek with some lessons about animals fit in. With younger students, the aim of the game is more about trying to find a way to hide their bodies completely. Play a few rounds to see what part of the game the young ones like the most, and then stick to those elements for the rest of the time.