

I CAN SENSE IT

Grades K – 2

45 min – 1 hr

Learning objectives:

Isolate and use four of the five senses to improve students' observational skills.

Understand how animals use their senses to survive.

Materials:

10 “Un-nature” trail items

2 Smell boxes or items that have a scent

Fresh herbs, or leaves that have a smell (anise and beauty berry)

3 Touch bags

Box turtle shell or snake skin

Animals and people depend on their senses in order to learn the necessary information about their environment that is needed for survival. Rabbits and deer depend on hearing to escape harm. Hawks and other raptors use vision to locate prey. Snakes use smell (on their tongue), and vibrations from the ground to sense what is nearby. Senses are their tools for survival.

Before the class arrives, set up the un-nature trail on the path between the Hiking trail trailhead and BPS fire ring. Place 10 items in the bushes or on the ground, slightly hidden or camouflaged in their surroundings. Make some obvious and some difficult. Mark the beginning and the end of the trail with flags.

Gather the students in a group and go over the five senses. Explain that animals depend on some senses more than others to survive. Have the students list the five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Tell them that they are going to see how well they use their senses to discover things. But we will save the sense of taste for lunch time since we will not taste wild things in the park.

Un-Nature Trail

Line up the students behind the beginning marker. Tell them they are going to use their eyes to test their observational skills. Look up and down for things that don't belong in nature. Don't point or call out when you find something. But keep count in your head (or on your fingers). One at a time, send a student down the trail. Allow a 10 -15 step lead before sending the next one out. When all students have reached the end marker, share how many items they found. As a group, walk back down the trail and point out the items. Review the activity by stressing how important it is to look carefully especially if it is an animal hunting for a meal. Lots of animals use camouflage to hide in plain sight. Ask for examples of animals that hunt with their eyes.

Optional activity is to walk around the pond and look for fish, dragonflies and other creatures and flowers at the pond. Do this to use up extra time or to help space out a rotation with another class that is in a station you need to use.

Touch bags (Big Pine Shores fire circle)

Produce three small paper bags, with one item each. (Beforehand, chose three very different but familiar objects, i.e. piece of fur, nut, seed pod, or shell). Have the students feel what is inside each bag with their hands behind their back. Have the parents or teacher help with this. Don't let them guess out loud until everyone has had a turn. Before showing the object, ask what they think it is. Finish by showing them the objects. Did they figure them all out? What animals need to feel their environment to survive? Snakes and turtles are very close to the ground and feel vibrations. Clams, Fiddler crabs and other tidal beach creatures feed at high tide and close up or burrow into the sand when they feel that the water is gone at low tide. Moles and other animals dig tunnels underground. **Our Box turtle shell can be carefully shown around. Do not hand it to them to pass.** Students can touch our snake skins, We will replace them when they are too torn to use.

Smell and Sound (Muscogee Cabin fire circle)

Tell them to close their eyes for one or two minutes and listen for sounds, both natural and man made. Be very quiet and hold up a finger each time you hear a new sound. Open your eyes, what sounds did we hear? What animals have been hearing? Is it a predator or prey?

Next, introduce smell with leaves you have collected (Anise and Beautyberry can be found in the park) or (fresh herbs if you have them). Provide two smell items with familiar smells like cinnamon or cocoa. Pass them around or hold the item for each to smell. Do you ever smell something first to decide if you might want to eat it? Vultures follow smells to find dead animals to eat. Many animals sniff things to discover what other animals are in the area. Using items that have a smell that does not give away the scent such as a candle or unmarked container will make it harder for the students to identify. Example: lemon grass does not look like a lemon so they can't use their eyes to identify the smell.

Taste

Explain that they are never to taste wild food without an adult verifying that it is not poisonous to people. Many animals can eat things that are poisonous to people. Some foods are not good for some animals but good for others. Sometimes it may not be poisonous but taste just awful. Different animals, just like people, have preferences and eat what they like first and what they don't like only if they have to. Has anyone had to eat what they didn't like because it was good for them but didn't like the taste?

Conclude with a review of the five senses

2/4/2014