

Balance of Nature



Background:

This game demonstrates the concept that nature is said to be in a state of balance when the populations of animals and plants are in such proportions that everyone has food without damaging the well-being of another species.

1. Divide the group evenly into three groups. These groups represent grass, mice, and bobcats and each group has a specific sign which distinguishes them from the others. In designating these groups, be sure to build up the reputations of the grass and the mice or everyone will want to be a bobcat.
2. When the game begins, the bobcats try to catch the mice, the mice try to catch the grass, and the grass try to catch the bobcats. The reasoning is that when bobcats die, their bodies fertilize the soil and provide nourishment for the grass.
3. If the chaser succeeds in tagging his victim, the victim then changes species and becomes whatever he was tagged by. It is wise to set boundaries. After a few minutes of play, call them all back and count how many of each species there are, then let the tagging start again.
4. After a few minutes, call them back again and count off. Often, the dying species will have made a remarkable recovery. The students can see that population is important and establishes a balance. If there are only a few mice, there will be plenty of grass for them to eat, and their predators, the bobcats, will have a harder time finding them. Therefore, it is likely that the mice will make a comeback.
5. This can be repeated as often as you like and different scenarios will play out. It can also bring about a great discussion if you introduce one hunter who can tag anyone in the game.

HINT: If you have something that would identify each group from the other groups, that would be helpful. For example, use colored pieces of cloth to identify each species, and have children wear the colored flags. Otherwise, children will have a hard time figuring out who is what; in other words, whether a child is a bobcat, mouse, or grass. Another way to do this is to have the children act like the species they represent by coming up with actions for the bobcats, mice, and grass. For example, bobcats could run around with their claws out, mice could show their whiskers, and grass could sway.

Variation:

Instead of players becoming the species that tagged them, they could sit down and be out for the rest of the round. Though this decreases overall participation, it is easier to identify who is what.

Website source:

<http://www.sanbornwesterncamps.com/library/documents/101%20Nature%20Activities.pdf>