

BIRDS and CATERPILLARS

Hungry Insectivores and Their Prey

* Supply List: bag of multi-colored toothpicks or gummiworms, bags for collecting, notepads, bird or bug stickers (optional)

1. Scatter differently colored "caterpillars" on grass or in leaf/pine litter outdoors with debris partially covering some of them. Some should be placed in the grass, some on shrubs, some on bark, some on bare soil, some on rocks, etc. You must also set boundaries so that the bird children do not stray too far in their search for caterpillars. Run a double relay race (each runner cycles through twice). Each bird must "fly" into the hunting area, pick up the first caterpillar they spot (only one each time), place it in their team's collection bag, then tag the next bird.

2. Divide the group up into 3 equal teams that are lined up at the boundary of the hunting area. *"Today we are all hungry insectivores. There are a flock of bluebirds, juncos, and flickers."* Each team could have a special call. *"It is early morning, and we are HUNGRY! In bird time, our morning is very short, so when I say – WAKE UP, It's morning – you'll want to gather food as quickly as possible."*

3. Which color will be the easiest to spot? Which color will be the hardest to find? Which will we find the most of, the next most of on down to the least? Have each flock record their predictions in their notepads.

4. *"WAKE UP! It's Morning Time!"* Let the birds gather caterpillars until each bird has hunted twice. Call them back and have each flock tally and record their caterpillars individually. See if their predictions came true.

Questions?

- *What color caterpillar did we find the most of in each habitat?*
- *Which color worm was best camouflaged overall?*
- *Pretend you are a caterpillar – if you were green, etc. where could you best blend in?*
- *Which colored caterpillars might be poisonous? (red, yellow, orange)*

Extensions

- *Have one group scatter the caterpillars for the other groups.*
- *Using camouflage, where could you best blend in at your house?*
- *Try the activity again in a different area.*