

## Predators and Prey

*Illinois Goals and Standards**Science: 11.A, 12.B, 13.A, 13.B Math: 6.A English Language Arts: 4.A, 5.A*

### Program Overview

The first part of the program will provide students with background information on predators and prey animals and adaptations each have to aid in survival. During this component students will discuss both physical and behavioral characteristics of predators and prey. After this brief content introduction, students will travel to one of the zoo's exhibits to conduct their own animal observations. While observing different species, they will determine whether each is a predator, prey animal or both and record their observations on a provided data sheet. At the end of the observation they'll review their data sheets and share their discoveries with their peers.

### Lesson Objectives

- Students will observe and describe predator and prey animal adaptations.
- Students will determine if an animal is a predator, prey animal or both.
- Students will record data based on careful observations.
- Students will draw conclusions based on collected data.

### Background Information

All animals need food to survive. Animals that eat meat are called carnivores. Carnivores might catch their own food or they might eat food left over from another animal's meal. Animals that rely on plant-based foods such as berries or leaves are called herbivores. Omnivores are what we call animals that eat a variety of meat and plant-based foods.

Most carnivores are also predators. A predator is an animal that hunts another animal. Prey is what we call the animal being captured and eaten. Some animals may be both. They may be predators of animals smaller than them but potential prey for larger animals. Both predators and prey animals have adaptations that help them survive.

Predators have forward-facing eyes that help them detect and attack prey. Once detected, sharp teeth and claws help the predators capture and consume the animal. Prey animals also have adaptations that help them elude predators. Some have camouflage that helps them hide in their environment. Others have protective armor like the shell of a turtle. Some species can be poisonous or simply taste badly if eaten by their predators. These animals often have bright coloring as a warning to stay away.

### How to Prepare

While advanced preparation is not required for a successful visit, reviewing a few basic skills before your visit can help make your students' experience more meaningful.

- To support the data-collection activity, review how to record the name of an animal to the best of students' ability.
- To support the data-collection activity, review how to draw and label an accurate representation of an animal or object.
- To support sharing discoveries, review the vocabulary below and how to respectfully share ideas with peers.

### Vocabulary:

Adaptation

Elude

Consume

Predator

Prey

Adaptations



## Back at School

### Extend the Inquiry

We hope you'll continue your explorations long after your visit to the zoo. We've provided a few ways you can extend inquiry-based explorations of predator and prey animals to the classroom.

- Observe animals near the schoolyard. Can you locate a predator? Can you locate an animal that is both a predator and a prey animal?
- Pay special attention to the way squirrels and rabbits search for food. Why do you think they move quickly and startle easily? Does this type of behavior remind you of any animals at the zoo?

### Connect Across the Curriculum

These are a few ways you can connect your science investigations with other areas of the curriculum.

#### *English Language Arts*

- Have the students select an animal commonly found in their neighborhood. Encourage them to spend time on the Internet and in the library learning more about their animal. Ask students to share two reliable information sources as well as an information source they think would not be something a scientist would use. Learning to review print and on-line material critically is an important skill to build!

#### *Visual Arts*

- Provide art materials so students can recreate the patterns of camouflage they saw while at the zoo. To support student recall, you can use photos from your visit, pictures from magazines or images from the Internet.