

SILENT STALKING

BIO
KEY Stalking/Listening Skills
Game/Simulation
Predator/Prey



OVERVIEW

By playing the roles of predators and prey in a game, the youngsters learn the importance of keen hearing and silent stalking skills.

BACKGROUND

Many predators must stalk their prey to get close enough to strike without warning. A mountain lion creeps quietly along a ledge until it comes within striking distance of a deer. A wading bird such as an egret or a heron stealthily pursues camouflaged frogs and darting fish until a sudden thrust of the bird's sharp bill can reach the prey. The slightest noise or careless movement on the part of the predator will alert the prey to its

presence. The prey also must move cautiously and silently, for it must avoid being detected by a predator. A good sense of hearing and the ability to pinpoint the direction from which sounds come are important survival adaptations for both predators and prey.

CHALLENGE: VISIT THE WATER HOLE WITHOUT BEING "CAPTURED" BY A PREDATOR.

MATERIALS



For each game group (five to ten players):

- 1 blindfold or OBIS mask
- 1 spray mister*
- 8 flags*
- 1 nine-meter length of light rope* (sash cord or clothes line)
- 1 3" x 5" index card for each "prey" (See the "Preparation" section.)
- 1 flashlight* with fresh batteries* (for night use)

For all the groups:

- 1 "OBIS Mask" Equipment Card*

For the game variations:

- cotton* or ear plugs
- masking tape*
- wax paper*
- cut rubber bands or elastic*

* Available from Delta Education.

PREPARATION



Group Size. *Silent Stalking* works best with five to ten players. If you have more than ten participants, divide the group into smaller groups (of no less than five players), and set up a game circle for each group.

Time. Plan on thirty to forty minutes for this activity during daytime or nighttime.

Site. Choose a fairly open, level site (a forest clearing, field, or vacant lot) that is noisy to walk on. Dry leaves and underbrush, gravel, pebbles, and crunchy snow make noisy walking surfaces.

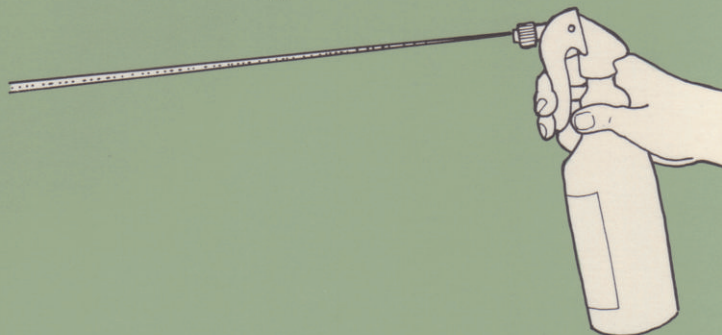
Materials

1. Masks. Make an OBIS mask for each game group. (The common

blindfold often invites peeking.) See the "OBIS Mask" Equipment Card.

2. Flashlights. When this activity is conducted at night, it is advisable to have a flashlight with fresh batteries available for each game group leader.

3. Spray Misters. Adjust the spray nozzles so that the spray misters squirt a narrow stream of water at least four to six meters in length.



4. Index Cards. Write the word *water* on an index card for each "prey."

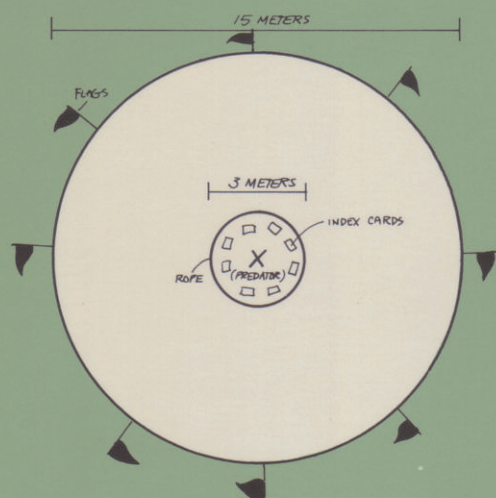
5. Wax Paper Masks. Place a strip of tape across the long edge of a 30 cm x 20 cm piece of wax paper, and attach a cut rubber band or a piece of elastic to each end of the tape.



Game Circle. Mark the outline of a large circle at least fifteen meters across with the flags. Use the piece of light rope to mark off a smaller circle about three meters across in the center of the large circle. This small circle represents the



“water hole.” Place the labeled index cards just inside the edge of the “water hole.”



ACTION

1. Tell the youngsters that they will play a game in which they assume the roles of **predators** (animals that eat other animals) and **prey** (animals that are eaten by other animals). The “prey” must get a drink at the water hole without being caught by the “predator.”

2. Show the youngsters the circles laid out on the ground. Tell them that the area outside the large circle is the forest, and the small circle is the water hole. The area between the small circle and the large circle is a clearing that the prey must walk across to get a drink (that is, pick up one of the index cards with *water* written on it).

3. Give the youngsters these rules:

- One member of the group is the predator; the other members are prey.
- The predator stands with a spray mister in the center of the water hole (the small circle) and puts on the mask. (Her ears should remain uncovered.)

- The prey spread out around the edge of the forest (outside the large circle).
- When everyone is ready, the masked predator starts spinning around while the prey walk around the edge of the forest. After spinning four times, the predator yells: “STOP!” Everyone, including the predator, stops.
- Now the prey move silently toward the water hole. The predator listens for the approaching prey and tries to “capture” them by hitting them with a stream of water from the spray mister before the prey can pick up a water card and return to the forest. The predator is allowed to “strike” (squirt the mister) only twice for each prey (that is, in a game with six prey, the predator gets only twelve strikes). The prey must pause after each step to see if the predator hits them.
- A referee (the group leader or a youngster) judges each strike as either a “hit” or a “miss” and keeps track of the number of strikes the predator makes. “Hit” prey must sit down at the spot where they were hit, and remain quiet and still until that round ends so that the predator can concentrate on detecting the remaining prey.
- The game ends when all of the prey have been captured, have returned to the forest with a “drink,” or when the predator has used up all her strikes.
- When everyone understands the game, select the predator and start playing. Play several rounds and suggest that at the end of each round the captured prey try to figure out what gave them away.
- Suggest playing other rounds using some of the following variations. Ask the youngsters to predict the outcome before playing.
 - Simulate a hearing loss due to injury or age by placing ear plugs or cotton in one or both of the predator’s ears.

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- Play the game on several different surfaces: a quiet one, a noisy one, a downhill slope, an uphill slope, or in shallow water.
- Get down on your hands and knees to simulate four-legged animals.
- Play the game on a windy (noisy) night.
- Use wax paper masks to obscure the vision of the prey. (See the "Preparation" section.)

STALKING TALK

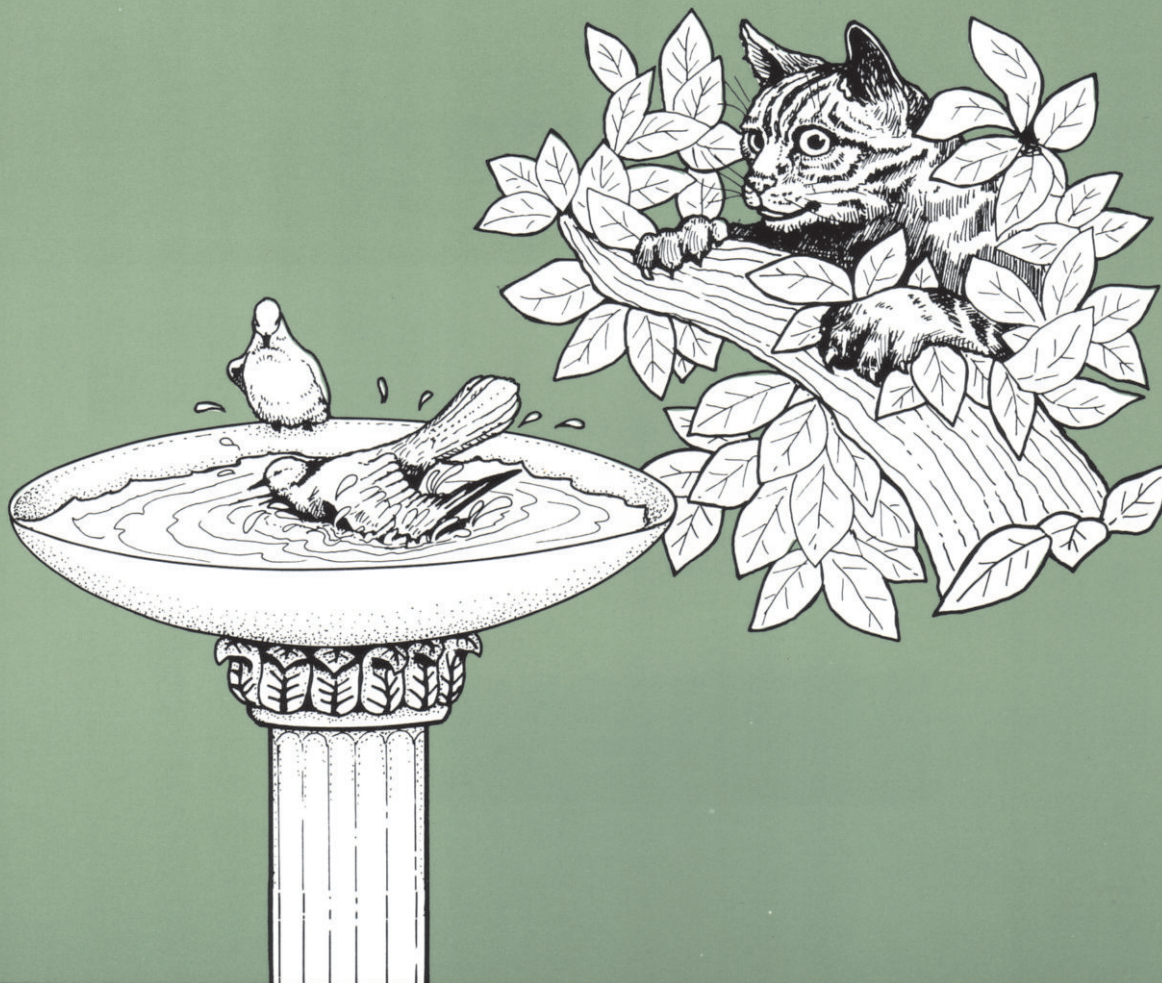


1. Ask the participants how they would change their bodies to be more successful as prey and as predators.
2. Ask the most successful prey to demonstrate their silent-stalking skills for the rest of the group.

BRANCHING OUT



1. Challenge the participants to see how close they can get to a bird, cat, fish, butterfly, squirrel, or lizard. At night, the youngsters could stalk night crawlers (worms), owls, frogs, or raccoons.
2. Encourage the kids to watch animals stalking their prey—a cat stalking a bird, a bird stalking insects or worms, or a friend trying to catch fish.
3. Ask youngsters with cameras to see who can get the closest picture of a given animal. (No telephoto lenses, please!)



Silent Stalking

OBIS MASK

Equipment Card



MATERIALS FOR ONE MASK:

- 1 piece of tracing paper (or other light paper)
- 1 manila folder, construction paper, or other cardstock
- pair of scissors
- stapler
- tape
- cut rubber band or piece of elastic
- cloth for shield
- pencil or sharp object for punching holes

MAKING YOUR MASK

1. Trace the mask outline below to make a pattern.

2. Use the pattern to cut a mask out of the heavy paper you have selected.
3. Reinforce the elastic attachment area with a couple pieces of tape.
4. After pulling the elastic through the holes, tie a knot at each end of the elastic.
5. Staple the elastic to the mask as shown.
6. Tape a cloth shield across the front of the mask.

piece of tape to prevent mask from tearing

staple
knotted elastic

rubber band or elastic

tape

paper mask

cloth shield

hole for rubber band or elastic