Animal Behavior

Life Science | Lesson Guide

1st Grade

Photo Description

This is a bright green lizard sitting on tree bark. You can see its bumpy skin, long tail, and one eye looking at you. The lizard's green color helps it hide among leaves and branches in nature.

Scientific Phenomena

Anchoring Phenomenon: Why is this lizard green?

This lizard is green because of camouflage—a special adaptation that helps animals blend into their environment to stay safe from predators. The green color is created by pigment in the lizard's skin. Animals that live in green forests and trees often have green coloring because it helps them hide from danger. This is an example of how animals' bodies are specially suited to the places where they live.

Core Science Concepts

* Camouflage and Adaptation: Animals have body parts and colors that help them survive in their habitats. The lizard's green skin helps it hide from predators among leaves and trees.

* Body Structure and Function: Lizards have special features like scales (bumpy skin), a long tail for balance, and eyes on the sides of their heads that help them see predators coming.

* Habitats: Lizards live in specific environments where their colors and body shapes match their surroundings. This green lizard lives in forests where green is common.

* Observation Skills: Scientists learn about animals by looking carefully at their colors, shapes, and behaviors.

Pedagogical Tip:

First graders learn best through direct observation and hands-on exploration. Rather than lecturing about camouflage, have students examine the lizard photo closely with a magnifying glass (if available) and ask them to describe what they notice. Use the phrase "I notice..." to scaffold observation language. This builds scientific vocabulary naturally.

UDL Suggestions:

To support all learners:
- Representation: Provide the image in multiple formats (printed, digital, projected) so students with different visual needs can engage. Consider providing a simplified diagram showing the lizard with labels.
- Action & Expression: Allow students to show understanding through drawing, acting out camouflage movements, or building a habitat with green materials rather than requiring written responses.
- Engagement: Connect to student interests by asking, "Have you ever seen an animal hide? Where?" to build relevance and curiosity.

Discussion Questions

1. What color is the lizard, and why do you think it is that color?
   (Bloom's: Understand | DOK: 1)

2. If this lizard lived on a brown tree instead of a green tree, what might happen to it? Why?
   (Bloom's: Analyze | DOK: 2)

3. Look at the lizard's skin carefully. What do you notice about how it looks different from human skin?
   (Bloom's: Analyze | DOK: 2)

4. Can you think of another animal that is green or brown? How does its color help it stay safe?
   (Bloom's: Apply | DOK: 2)

Extension Activities

1. Camouflage Hunt: Hide pictures of animals around the classroom on backgrounds that match their colors (a green frog picture on a green paper, a brown squirrel on brown paper). Have students find the animals and discuss why they were hard to find. This makes camouflage concrete and fun!

2. Design Your Own Animal: Provide students with a habitat picture (forest, desert, pond) and have them color or paint an animal to match that habitat. Ask them to explain why their animal's colors would help it survive there.

3. Move Like a Lizard: Play a movement game where students pretend to be lizards hiding on trees and rocks. Call out different backgrounds ("You're on a green leaf! You're on brown bark!"), and have students freeze in that "camouflage." This combines kinesthetic learning with the concept.

NGSS Connections

Performance Expectation:
K-LS1-1: Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive.

Disciplinary Core Ideas:
* K-LS1.A Structure and Function
* K-LS1.C Organization for Matter and Energy Flow in Organisms

Crosscutting Concepts:
* Patterns
* Structure and Function

Science Vocabulary

* Camouflage: When an animal's color or pattern helps it hide from other animals.

* Adaptation: A special body part or color that helps an animal live in its habitat.

* Scales: Small, hard pieces of skin that cover a lizard's body like tiny plates.

* Habitat: The place where an animal lives, like a forest or a desert.

* Predator: An animal that hunts other animals for food.

External Resources

Children's Books:
The Chameleon* by Manya Stojic (shows color-changing adaptation)
Camouflaged Creatures* by Deborah Hodge (explores how different animals hide)
Lizards* by Gail Gibbons (clear, simple facts about lizards)

YouTube Videos:
* "Chameleon Camouflage for Kids" - A short, engaging video showing how camouflage works in nature. https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=chameleon+camouflage+for+kids

* "Amazing Lizards" - National Geographic Kids - Shows diverse lizard adaptations and habitats at an appropriate pace for young learners. https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=national+geographic+kids+lizards

---

Teacher Note: This lesson builds observational skills while introducing the critical concept that animals' bodies are adapted to their environments—a foundational idea in life science that students will revisit throughout their elementary years.