

Photo Description



This image shows a small, tan-colored lizard resting on a dark, weathered piece of wood surrounded by fallen leaves and forest debris. The lizard's body color and texture match the wood and leaves around it, making it hard to spot at first glance. This is an example of how animals blend into their environment to stay safe.

Scientific Phenomena

Anchoring Phenomenon: Camouflage (also called "hiding by blending in")

Why This Happens: Animals have colors and patterns on their skin, fur, or scales that match the places where they live. When an animal's appearance matches its surroundings—like this lizard matching the brown wood—predators (animals that hunt other animals) have a harder time seeing it. This helps the animal survive because it won't get eaten as easily. Over many, many years, animals with colors that blend in with their homes survive better and have babies that also have those blending colors. This is part of nature's way of helping animals stay safe.

Core Science Concepts

- * Animals have different body colors and patterns. Some animals are bright, and some are brown, green, or gray. These colors are not accidents—they help animals survive in their specific homes.
- * The environment includes many different habitats with different colors and textures. A lizard living in a forest with brown wood and leaves needs different colors than a lizard living on green grass. Each animal "fits" its home.
- * Camouflage is a survival strategy. When animals blend into their surroundings, hungry predators cannot find them easily. This helps animals stay alive and have babies.
- * Observation skills help us learn about nature. Scientists (and first graders!) can look carefully at photos and environments to spot animals hiding in plain sight and understand how nature works.

Pedagogical Tip:

Start with a "Can you find it?" game before explaining camouflage. Show the image and ask students to locate the lizard without telling them where it is. This builds curiosity and observation skills before introducing the vocabulary and concept. Once they find it, the "aha!" moment makes the lesson stick!

UDL Suggestions:

To support multiple ways of learning: (1) Representation: Use the image projected large on a screen, and provide a highlighted version showing the lizard's outline for students who struggle with visual discrimination. (2) Action & Expression: Allow students to show understanding through drawing, acting out an animal hiding, or using colored blocks to create their own camouflaged animal. (3) Engagement: Connect to student interests by asking, "What animals live in YOUR neighborhood? Do they have colors that help them hide?"

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think this lizard is brown and not bright blue? (Bloom's: Analyze | DOK: 2)
2. If this lizard lived on bright green grass instead of brown wood, what color do you think it should be, and why? (Bloom's: Evaluate | DOK: 3)
3. Can you think of another animal that hides by blending in with where it lives? What color is it, and where does it live? (Bloom's: Create | DOK: 3)
4. What would happen to this lizard if it were bright red instead of brown? (Bloom's: Understand | DOK: 2)

Extension Activities

1. Camouflage Hunt: Take students outside (or use a prepared classroom space) and hide colored paper shapes or small objects in different areas. Students must find objects that blend in with their surroundings. Discuss which colors were easiest or hardest to find and why. This teaches observation and reinforces the concept that matching colors helps hide things.
2. Create Your Own Camouflaged Animal: Provide students with paper, crayons, and images of different habitats (forest, desert, ocean, grass). Have each child draw and color an animal that would blend in with one habitat. Display and have students guess which habitat each animal belongs to based on its colors.
3. Movement and Hiding Game: Play a movement game where one student is the "predator" with closed eyes, and other students move slowly across the room wearing clothes/accessories that either match or don't match the classroom colors. After opening their eyes, the predator names which children they spotted first—connecting the concept to real-world predator-prey interactions in a fun, safe way.

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 - All organisms have basic needs, which include access to resources. (Animals need to stay safe from predators.)
- 3-LS4.B - Individuals of the same kind have different characteristics, and sometimes the differences give the individual an advantage in surviving or reproducing.

Crosscutting Concepts:

- Patterns - Patterns in nature help us understand how animals survive.
- Structure and Function - The color and pattern of an animal's body help it survive in its environment.

Science Vocabulary

- * Camouflage: Colors and patterns on an animal's body that help it blend into its surroundings so predators cannot see it easily.
- * Habitat: The place where an animal lives, including the plants, rocks, soil, and weather in that area.
- * Blend in: To match the colors and textures around you so you are hard to see.
- * Predator: An animal that hunts and eats other animals to survive.

* Survival: Staying alive by meeting your needs for food, water, shelter, and safety.

External Resources

Children's Books:

- The Best Hide-and-Seek Game Ever by Paul Meisel (a simple story about animals hiding in nature)
- Who Hides in the Snow? by Carol Lindeen (explores winter camouflage)
- Hiding Places by Giles Laroche (non-fiction exploration of animal camouflage)

YouTube Videos:

- "Camouflage in Animals" by National Geographic Kids — A 4-minute video showing real animals using camouflage in nature. Colorful, engaging, and age-appropriate. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2-MIU7t7kk>
- "Animal Camouflage for Kids" by Crash Course Kids — An animated, 5-minute introduction to why animals have camouflage and examples from different habitats. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYLMaU-g5lg>