



## Activities Make a Camouflage T-shirt

This activity represents how an animal can be coloured and shaped so that it blends in with its surroundings.

Some predators use aggressive camouflage to get closer to prey before pouncing. This is ambush predation. It relates to the *Eaten Alive* exhibit Aquatic Ambush.

### What you need

- Plain old long-sleeved shirts.
- Fabric paint or dye (particularly green, brown, black and white paint).
- Strips of old lace, tulle or netting.
- Liquid glue or sewing needle and thread.
- Small to medium sized bushes to blend against.

### What to do

1. Look at your chosen bush's colours and leaf shape.
2. Use the paints to paint your shirt in matching colours and shapes. Dashes of colour are better than large blocks or areas of colour.
3. Paint the strips of lace, tulle or netting in similar green colours.
4. When all paint is dry, glue or stitch the strips of lace, tulle or netting onto the shirt in random patterns.
5. Stand in front of the bush and ask a classmate to stand about 20 metres away. Is the camouflaged person a little difficult to see?

### What to notice

If a person has more netting on their T-shirt, do they seem to be better camouflaged against the bushes?

Would they blend in even more if they wore body paint?

Think about the environment you would like to blend in and design a T-shirt that will camouflage you in this environment. For example, the outside of your house might be made of bricks. Paint bricks on your t-shirt using the right colours. If you paint books on shelves you will camouflage in a library really well!

### What's happening

Lots of animals blend into their natural surroundings. This is called camouflage.

Prey animals often use camouflage to hide from predators and predators use camouflage to hide and wait for prey or sneak up on prey without being noticed.

For example, Himalayan rabbits are brown in summer and turn white in winter to camouflage against the snow.

Ambush predators use aggressive camouflage to hide undetected...waiting for prey to come closer before they POUNCE!

Some prey use protective camouflage to avoid being found. Other prey look like something dangerous to the predator such as a poisonous animal (Batesian mimicry).

Different types of camouflage used by aquatic animals include:

#### Cryptic camouflage

Skin patterned in different shades or colours to blend with the background.

#### Countershading

Having a light coloured belly and dark coloured back so animals looking up or down through water or air can't easily see their silhouette.

#### Transparency

Transparent body with colourful lures such as tentacles.

#### Disruptive camouflage

Feathery fins, bumpy skin and colouring to break up the animal's outline. For example, the tasselled anglerfish has feathery skin, so it looks like a mossy rock.