



Soundscape Activity

Stalking Prey

This activity also represents American Indian and early native cultures. In this game children attempt to sneak up on one another to represent stalking animals while hunting.

Select one person to represent an animal that is being hunted. This person will stand with his or her back to the group, about 30 feet away from the others. Depending on how many children there are, line them up in teams of four. Remind those who are waiting that they need to be as quiet as possible. At a silent signal from the leader the first group of four will begin walking toward the child that is acting as prey. The object is to tag this person before they hear the others coming. If the “prey” hears a sound from the oncoming team, he or she should raise a hand. At this point the team loses its turn and steps outside the playing area. The leader signals the next group to begin and the game continues this way until someone tags the prey. At this point the tagger can replace the prey and the game resumes.

Generally no one makes it all the way to the prey on the first round. At this point gather the group and discuss what they need to do differently. Have them practice stalking – walking very quietly, stepping on tiptoes and rolling toward the soles of the feet, while crouching in a low position for balance. Ask them what other things they might change in order to walk as silently as possible. Some ideas are to remove noisy coats or squeaky shoes, avoid twigs or leaves that might rustle and move very slowly.

Repeat the activity as time allows or until someone tags the prey indicating they have been caught.

Discussion:

Have children relate what it felt like, and how difficult it was to be silent. Remind them of the types of clothing native people wore in the past that might have helped them move more quietly. Talk about feelings of anxiety and fear the Indians might have experienced and how their hunting abilities were a matter of survival.

This can lead into a discussion about the importance of natural sounds and what they meant to people and animals both in the past and today. Get children thinking about their favorite nature sounds. Discuss how important sounds are for animal communication and how our activities when in parks can affect them. Encourage children to practice walking quietly in the woods and listen carefully to the natural sounds around them.



With their “silent” wings, owls are masters at catching prey by surprise. Photo by Randolph Femmer/NBII



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The Natural Sounds Program works to protect, maintain, or restore acoustical environments throughout the National Park System. We fulfill this mission by working in partnership with parks and others to increase scientific and public understanding of the value and character of soundscapes and to eliminate or minimize noise intrusions.

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