

Hiding In Plain Sight



Background: There are about 2,900 species of snake, and the majority of them possess mild or no venom. Only 2 of the 27 snake species native to Maryland are venomous - the copperhead and the timber rattlesnake (pictured). The Maryland Zoo is home to a wide variety of native and non-native snakes, some of which are venomous. The zookeepers who care for these unique residents are specially trained to work with them in order to make sure they receive the best care possible, while also remaining safe!

A large portion of the diet of many snakes includes mice and other rodents. Because they eat so many rodents, snakes act as important pest controllers, and therefore are very important for the environment! In order to catch their prey, as well as hide from predators, many snakes use *camouflage*, an adaptation that refers to any special coloring, marking, or physical feature that allows an animal to blend in with their surroundings. Let's play a special version of hide and seek to try our hand at camouflaging like a snake!

Materials:

- Small toy animal replicas or print various animal pictures in color
- Binoculars, or if you don't have any, you can make your own out of toilet paper rolls!

Instructions: Designate one person as the predator and anyone else participating in the game as prey. Each prey animal can pick a toy. The predator should then sit down in the middle of the room and cover their eyes. The prey can spend a couple of minutes hiding their toy animals in plain sight of the predator, trying to find places where the toys will blend in, or camouflage. Once the toys are hiding in plain sight, the predator can open their eyes and look for the prey (try with binoculars!), without leaving their location. Once the predator finds all the prey, switch roles around and play as many rounds as you would like. Try mixing up the toys to keep it interesting!