

Colorful Creatures

DID YOU KNOW?



Like humans, the American black bear (*Ursus americanus*) is a mammal of many colors. Ranging throughout North America, the fur of this species can vary from coal black, brown, and cinnamon to tan, blonde, bluish gray, and white.

In areas with dense underbrush, such as eastern forests, the bears are nearly all black. The dark pigment (melanin) protects the fur from abrasion. In open areas, such as meadows where there is more sunlight, a lighter color fur reduces heat and may also help with camouflage.

GET OUTDOORS!

Notice the colors of the animals in your yard and neighborhood. Can you find a species with individuals in a variety of colors? Are the young a different color than their parents? Are some colored for camouflage? How do you know? In your nature journal, list the animals you see.

Play Creative Colors! Gather natural objects such as seeds, petals, and leaves in a variety of colors and create colorful designs and pictures.

*Colorful creatures, varied hue—
Black or cinnamon, white or blue.
Although different in what we see,
They're all the same—like you and me!*



Chirping Crickets

DID YOU KNOW?



You can tell the temperature by a cricket's song. Chirping becomes more frequent as the temperature rises. Hot summer days are a symphony of sounds when males court their mates.

As weather cools, female crickets set about laying eggs for the next generation. A special tubelike organ called an ovipositor (oh-vuh-**poz**-i-ter) is used for this purpose.

Adults will not survive winter; the cold brings silence. In spring, young emerge from the eggs and once again, chirping crickets brighten the day.

GET OUTDOORS!

Look in your yard and neighborhood for signs of insect burrows in the soil and plants. Can you find tiny holes? Have they been made by insects? How do you know?

Listen for the sounds of wildlife. Can you hear crickets chirping? Birds singing? Squirrels chattering?

Make holes! Using a stick like an ovipositor, poke holes in the ground. Place a seed in each hole. Cover them up, and see what emerges in spring.

Now jump and hop like a cricket and sing out loud!

*Crickets are silent in winter's chill;
Buried in eggs they wait until
Sunshine brings warm days of spring,
When once again they'll chirp and sing!*



Swimming School

DID YOU KNOW?



Black crappie (*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*) are social fish who like to school. The predominate time for schooling is early spring when they swim to shallow water to build colonies of nests.

Males are the nest builders who fan and excavate sand to form a circular depression where the females deposit eggs. After spawning, the doting dads guard and tend the eggs and fry (babies) until they are old enough to hide in the surrounding vegetation. There the young wait until it's time to go to school!

GET OUTDOORS!

Look in your yard or neighborhood for groups of animals. Can you see flocks of birds? Herds of deer? Families of squirrels? Are they social or protective gatherings? How do you know?

Join some friends and play Swimming School! Choose a Predator to hide while everyone else plays a fish traveling from home. Stick close together like a school moving in unison. When Predator jumps out and tags a fish, the school runs quickly home. The tagged fish then becomes Predator and a new school forms.

*Swim, little fish in your blue-water school;
Travel in groups—is the number one rule.
Dart to the left and dodge to the right;
Move in unison for fun and flight!*



Habitat Hearts

DID YOU KNOW?



Hearts and lace can be found in shady woodland habitats.

Wild bleeding heart (*Dicentra* spp.) has delicate heart-shaped flowers dangling like pretty pendants from long slender stems. Two outer petals curve to form the heart, and peeking out from within are two beaked inner petals that extend below like droplets. The curving stems grow from a thick base of lacy, fringed leaves.

Bleeding hearts provide nectar for birds and insects, serve as host plants for butterfly eggs and caterpillars, and provide cover for small animals.

GET OUTDOORS!

Look in your yard and neighborhood for nature's hearts and lace. Can you find heart-shaped leaves, flower petals, seeds, or bird wings? Lacy leaves, bark, spider webs, or clouds? Note what you find in your nature journal.

Make a valentine for wildlife! Gather seeds, nuts, pinecones, and acorns and arrange them into a heart-shaped design for your animal friends.

*Flower hearts and lacy leaves combine
To create a woodland valentine
That brings a message to love and care
For the wildlife friends whose homes we share.*





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Engaging communities, families, and individuals in outdoor experiences to achieve healthier lifestyles and sustain Florida's natural resources.

Every child has the right to:

- Swim in a healthy lake
- Build a sandcastle or outdoor fort
- Camp out under the stars
- Climb a tree
- Catch a fish
- Hike a path
- Watch a bird
- Listen to a cricket, bird or frog
- Smell a wildflower
- Explore nature
- Volunteer to help wildlife
- Celebrate Florida's heritage



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