



Backyard Biodiversity Detectives: Are You Me?

Learn about features of young wildlife and their parents in a matching game

(ages 3-7 years)

The life stages of animals cause them to go through many different changes. As with our bodies, animals go through development and growth to reach adulthood. Some animals are like us, giving birth to live young who look like similar smaller versions of the adults. Some animals go through more changes than others.

Metamorphosis means to change during growth. Some animals, such as a grasshopper, go through simple metamorphosis such as the development from an egg to a nymph to an adult. Others go through complete metamorphosis from egg to larvae to pupae to adult. A butterfly goes through complete metamorphosis, developing from an egg to a caterpillar larva to a pupal chrysalis to an adult butterfly. The animals that go through complete metamorphosis do not look like a smaller version of the adult when they go through their developing phases.

Materials

Photo cards of parents with baby animals.

Steps

1. Help children make card sets of parent-juvenile animals by letting them look for and cut out pictures (e.g. from calendars, magazines, etc.). Have the children glue the cut outs onto construction paper and cut out an interesting shaped boarder. Then draw a puzzle line on the back of the construction paper that will separate the parents from the babies when cut apart. Children can cut out the puzzle pieces if desired and then laminate or mactac them individually.
 - Option: As a preliminary activity, collect a few pictures of you and your children or you as a child and one of your parents at about your age. Play a game of matching pictures. Identify all the ways that human babies or children look like their parents and which ways they do not. Make a display board of the child/adult pictures. Can they see any ways they look like either parent? Discuss your findings in a family group/circle time. You could also use pictures of your children as infants and recent photos.
2. This activity can be done in a variety of ways, depending on the ages and number of children. Begin by reading a story involving the matching of wildlife babies with adults or the metamorphosis of an animal or insect. In a group setting (e.g. circle time), or on an individual basis, children can match young wildlife pictures with parents you hold up from the puzzle cards. The "puzzle" format of this activities helps children with self-evaluation of their responses and gives hints for young children.



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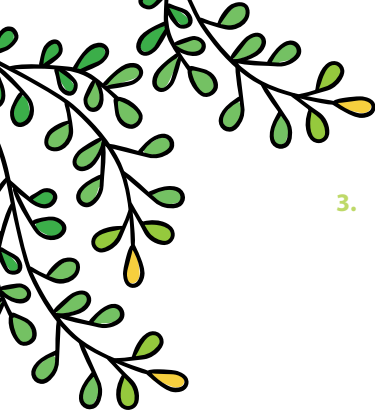
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3. Use the puzzle cards for various games after the children have had some experiences with them. Try:
- Attaching a card to each child and encourage them to find their match by making the sounds and/or acting like the animals.
 - Turn the cards upside down and play a memory type game where they chose one card and try to find the other matching one.
 - Add velcro or glue sandpaper to the back and put the picture puzzles on a flannel board for individual or group play.
 - Have children investigate where these animals have their young. Do they use nests, holes in trees, dens, lodges (beavers) or do they live their young life in streams, like a dragonfly nymph? Create other flannel board pieces as necessary and make up a story.
 - Act out the story in a role play from a very young baby all the way to adulthood.

More ideas!

- Find pictures of animals or insects that show a series of stages of metamorphosis. In this case, work on basic sequencing concepts of life stages. Use creatures that are familiar e.g. frogs (egg – tadpole – froglet - frog); butterflies (egg – caterpillar larvae – pupal chrysalis - butterfly); birds (egg – chick – adult).
- If you do not have a yard or place you can visit to observe young animals with their parents, arrange for a visitor to watch metamorphosis take place in your home. Make sure the creature has all its needs (food and moisture) and is then returned to its natural habitat afterwards. Suggestions: woodbugs, a caterpillar kept in a terrarium, chick eggs hatched an incubator, or keep mason bees.
- Use plants and seeds instead of animals for older children.

Book suggestions:

- Carle, Eric. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, Philomel Books, New York, 1987.
- Mazer, Anne. *The Salamander room*, Dragonfly Books, 1991

Caterpillar (fingerplay):

Caterpillar, caterpillar, brown and furry
(move finger creeping up arm)

You're getting bigger, you'd better hurry
(move faster)

Find a leaf under which to creep
(hold hand over finger-caterpillar)

Spin a chrysalis in which to sleep
(spin hand round and round finger)

Then when springtime comes one day
(open arms in large circular motion)

You'll be a butterfly and fly away
(hook thumbs and wave fingers in flying motion)

