Mammal Related Games

Bat and Moth

This game only requires a blind fold and a large group of enthusiastic children (and/or adults!). The group stands in a circle, arms outstretched, touching fingertips. Someone is chosen to be the Bat and one or more Moths are chosen, depending on the size of the group.

The Bat is blindfolded, to mimic a real life bat that doesn't use sight to find its prey. The Bat and the Moths enter the circle and the aim of the game is for the Bat to tag the Moths to get them out. The Bat calls to the Moths to mimic the sonar used by a Bat. The Bat shouts 'Bat' and immediately (like an echo) the Moths must respond 'Moth'. This way, the Bat walks towards the 'Moth' call and tries to tag the Moth who tries to avoid being tagged. Both the Bat and the Moth must stay within the circle. The children forming the circle are the trees in the forest and must gently steer the Bat back into the circle if they come close. They can also call 'tree' if the bat is about to bump into them. When a Moth is tagged out, they become a tree until all the Moths are caught and then the game begins again. If it is taking a long time for the Bat to tag the Moth then suggest that the Bat shouts 'Bat' every couple of seconds so that they can more easily track the moth. This mirrors the rapid calling of real bats. If this still doesn't work then you can have all the trees take a step in towards the centre of the circle to make it smaller.

Resources needed: only a blind fold. (However bats are not blind but use echolocation to navigate and catch their prey in the dark).

Sly fox and wise owl

This is a true or false game based on mammal facts mentioned in a previous talk or activity. Collect the group to stand at the midpoint between two trees. Tell them sly fox lives under one tree and tells lies; wise owl lives in the other tree and tells the truth. All the children stand in the middle. Make a statement (for instance "British bats eat insects" or "hedgehogs hibernate in the summer" and the children then decide which tree to run to dependent on whether they think the statement is true (wise owl's tree) or false (sly fox's tree). Return them to the middle after each statement and reiterate the true answer before starting again.

Fox and Rabbits

The group is split into two teams - the foxes and the rabbits. The rabbits are situated at one end of a rectangle in a safe area that we can call a warren (see diagram left). They need to run to the other end of the rectangle to another warren. However they must cross the killing zone populated by the foxes. If a fox catches a rabbit the rabbit then becomes a fox itself to simulate the fact that if prey is abundant foxes will breed and produce more foxes. If the fox does not catch a rabbit then it changes to a rabbit to demonstrate that if prey numbers fall so will the numbers of foxes. Only one rabbit can be caught on each excursion across the zones. The rabbits will need to keep on going back and forth. The reasons for their constant movement could be explained as disturbance or scouting for new areas to colonize. Over the course of the game fox and rabbit numbers will fluctuate but care must be taken that an odd number of contestants are present because it could happen that five foxes catch five rabbits leaving 10 foxes resulting in the end of the game, though this can be an interesting talking point as well. The catching of the rabbits should be a gentle tap on the shoulder (not a rugby tackle). Better still, the rabbits could wear small pieces of cloth tucked into the back of trousers or skirt as tails that the foxes have to remove. This should alleviate the aggressive nature of the game. The game can go on indefinitely and will tire out even the most enthusiastic participants.

This is a great game for showing the fluctuations between predator and prey. The numbers should vary throughout the game and if the total number of participants is not an even number the game can go on indefinitely.

Equipment needed: Pieces of cloth for the tails, fox masks optional.

More Information on Mammals

The Mammal Society www.mammal.org.uk. (information sheets)

Bat Conservation Trust www.bats.org.uk. (Education and outreach information – Bats for All resource pack)

People's Trust for Endangered Species - http://www.ptes.org.

Natural History Museum – Nature online http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/index.html. (lots of useful information and resources)

iSPOT http://www.ispot.org.uk/. (Mammal forum and there will be some identification keys on this website soon)

OPAL - www.opalexplorenature.org.

Barn Owl Trust – www.barnowltrust.org.uk. (owl pellet analysis sheets)

Derbyshire Mammal Group – www.derbyshiremammalgroup.com. (identification key and Derbyshire distribution information- look out too for the forthcoming book – The Mammals of Derbyshire!)

Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group – www.derbyshirebats.org.uk.

Nottinghamshire bat group - http://www.southnottsbatgroup.org.uk/.

Lincolnshire Bat Group - http://www.lincsbatgroup.co.uk

Debbie Alston

Debbie@debbiealston.co.uk.

www.debbiealston.co.uk.