



# Cryptic Critters

\*Location of activity provided by staff\*

## Summary

Intro discussion: 3 mins

Activity: 15 mins

Conclusion/sharing: 3 mins

**Grades:** (suggested) K-3

**Subject:** Camouflage and Adaptation

## **Activity Objective:**

To have students learn about cryptic coloration and patterns (camouflage) as they locate colored "critters" and design their own cryptic animal scenes.

## **Materials & Preparation:**

### PROVIDED:

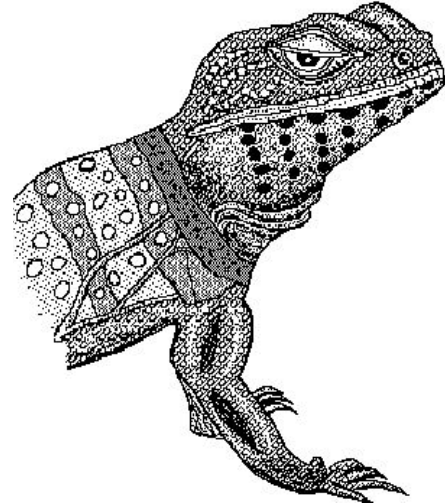
- Pipe Cleaner "worms"
- Clipboards
- Photos showing examples of cryptic coloration
- Crayons
- Coloring sheets
- Collection of line drawings of desert animals
- Books: *Animals in Camouflage*, *I see animals Hiding*, *Animals Tracks*, *Grasses of Southeastern Arizona*

### NOT PROVIDED:

- Large envelope to transport drawings back to school

**PREP:** Check the contents of the Cryptic Critter box, locate a definite strip of desert about 4 feet by 10 feet near the ramada, scatter the "worms" over the area (about 3 worms per child), spread out the sheet under the ramada, weigh down edges with rocks.

**Key Vocabulary Terms:** camouflage, protective coloration



## **Intro Discussion:** (about 3 mins)

Discuss the meaning of protective coloration (also called cryptic coloration or camouflage). Can the students think of any examples of animal colors or patterns, which allow them to be hidden from predators?

Some coloration doesn't conceal, but instead, gives off false information by mimicking (imitating) something that is bad tasting, such as the monarch butterfly. Some animals take on the appearance of another form completely. Examples are the walking stick insect that looks like a twig, or insects that look like leaves.

## **Activity:** (15 mins)

1. Each student chooses (or is given) the name of a desert bird. Two or three children may be the same bird. Examples of birds that would eat worm-like creatures are:

Cactus wren	Mockingbird
Curve-billed thrasher	Gila woodpecker
Roadrunner	Robin (spring and fall migrant)
2. The leader calls out a bird name. Each student with this name "flies" to the area where the "worms" are scattered and picks up the first worm that catches their eye. As the "birds" return from their "flight", they lay their worms on the table in the order they are picked up. Conduct three "flights". All of the "worms" may not be found.
3. As the children look at the captured "worms", ask what color worms were gathered first. Why? Would there be a different pattern if the worms were scattered on grass rather than on desert soil?
4. Look at the pictures of protective coloration and allow the children to discuss various ways animals are hidden from predators because of color or shape.
5. Hand out one animal picture per student to be colored. The backgrounds on these pictures are purposely not well defined. The children color their animal as realistically as they can and then create a natural background that hides the animal. Direct children to write their names on their drawings.

**Conclusion:** (about 3 mins)

The students may wish to share their drawings with the others for a final discussion.  
Students may look at the books.

**Clean Up:**

Place drawings in the envelope and give it to the teacher.  
After the last group, collect all the "worms". Count them to be sure that all have been collected. Place the box on the table in "Biznaga" building.

