

Exploring Animal Adaptations

The Owl and Mouse Game—Hunting by Sound

As humans, we primarily rely on our eyesight to get through most daily tasks. However, as we have learned, raptors have a very heightened auditory system. They are capable of picking up sounds that we aren't, from the far off sounds of a stream to the slight rustle of a mouse in the leaves. Raptors use this amazing hearing ability to help them locate their food. This *adaptation* of hunting by sound is one of the reasons that raptors are such amazing predators. In this activity, we will put our own hearing and ability to hunt by sound to the test!

Material List

- Quiet setting
- Blindfold
- A piece of scrap paper

How To Set Up

1. Arrange the children in a circle, all facing center.
2. Select one volunteer to enter the center of the circle and play the role of the owl. The volunteer should wear the blindfold securely so he or she cannot see.
3. Select a second volunteer to play the role of the mouse. Give him or her the piece of scrap paper.

The Game

Have the owl “hunt” for the mouse, relying only on sound to pinpoint the target. The mouse should not make any noise, but should occasionally rustle the piece of scrap paper to give the owl a hint. When the owl successfully tags the mouse, have the volunteers go back to the circle and select two new volunteers.

If the game is too easy, have the children forming the circle make slight movements or noises, such as swaying and the “shhh” of the wind, in order to mask the sound of the rustling mouse. This will make it harder for our owl to track the mouse!

After all the kids have had a chance, have them discuss what they learned. Can they come up with any reasons to why hunting by sound is an important adaptation for raptors?

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