

ACTIVITY: TAKE A NIGHT WALK

Night walks give us a chance to explore some of the characteristics of nocturnal animals.

Supplies Needed:

- Flashlights, one for each going on the night walk
- Reflective clothing (i.e. white or light colored shirts and pants)
- Bag filled with several small objects (i.e. rocks, pinecones, sticks, leaves)

Process:

1. Adults can start a conversation about going on a night walk. Ask the children, "What do you think we will see? What do you think we will hear?"
2. As a group, decide where you will be going for the night walk. Choose an area that has some trees and shrubs.
3. Be sure to wear reflective clothing. Walk slowly in a safe place and stay together to prevent accidents.
4. Shine a flashlight across an open space or into shrubs. Look for the eyeshine – the light reflecting off an animal's eye – of these nocturnal animals:
 - Raccoon - yellow
 - Bullfrog - green
 - Skunk - orange
 - Deer - white
 - Spider - red
 - Cat - green
5. In the fall, watch for deer, who are active in the early evening. Listen for the katydids' scratchy call: "katydid, katydidn't." Look for migrating birds in the moonlight.
6. In the winter, watch for animal tracks. Squirrel, rabbit and deer tracks can often be seen.
7. Deer have large ears for catching sound. Cup your hands behind your ears and slowly turn your head from side to side like a deer. What do you hear?
8. Most nocturnal animals have wet noses. A damp nose collects more odor molecules. Take a deep breath. What do you smell? Dampen your nose. Now what do you smell?
9. Raccoons have sensitive hands for finding food in the dark. Take along a bag of secret objects. In the dark, feel the objects and guess their identity.

Suggested Adult Interactions:

- Ask children what they think the benefits of being a nocturnal animal would be.
- See if you can make tracks like the animal tracks you saw. Hop like the rabbits and run like a deer.
- Have children choose a nocturnal animal and move around like it.
- Gather some crayons, black watercolor and paper and draw nocturnal animals in a nighttime scene. Then paint over the crayon to see the drawings show up through the paint. Add string and make a nocturnal animal mask.

Skills Developed:

- Observation skills
- Sensory motor skills
- Sound awareness skills (an early literacy skill)
- Problem-solving skills
- Respect for living things
- Awareness of the characteristics of different animals
- Large and fine motor skills

Reading Books:

- *Good-Night Owl* by Pat Hutchins
- *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen
- *Stellaluna* by Janell Cannon

Adult References:

- *The Sense of Wonder* by Rachel Carson
- *Earth Child* by Kathryn Sheehan and Mary Waidner, Ph.D

Next time you are here:

Search throughout the *Earth World* gallery to find all the nocturnal animals and count them. How many do you think you'll find?

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