



Fox and Food

Audience

Activity designed for 10 years old and up, at least 2 people.

Goal

Students will better understand the hunting techniques of the Red fox.

Objective

- To learn how to use a compass.
- To be able to explain how a Red fox hunts.

Conservation Message

There are 23 species of foxes worldwide that encompass four genera. Foxes are an important part of their ecosystem and without them there would be a devastating cascading effect. Unfortunately, there are some fox species that are popular in the exotic animal trade and are taken from the wild and sold to people that want to keep them as pets. The fennec fox for example is the fourth most common mammal in the global exotic pet trade. Here in Oklahoma we have swift foxes in the panhandle and many residents complain that the foxes are invading suburbs and killing livestock.

Background Information

Foxes are considered omnivores because they eat plants and animals, however, their diet consists primarily of insects and small rodents. Because they eat meat, they need to be good hunters. There is one fox, the Red fox, that has a very distinct hunting style. They can use the Earth's magnetic field to help them pinpoint exactly where a rodent is underneath the snow. Scientists believe that foxes have an internal compass that helps them determine distance and direction. Red foxes jump high in the air and dive towards the ground to surprise their prey, this is known as mousing. Researchers have observed Red foxes jumping in a northeastern direction, regardless of the time of day. This means that Red foxes could possibly have an internal compass that they use in order to hunt prey.

Materials Needed

- Compass (you can even get one on your phone)

- Items to hide (like stuffed animals for “prey”) or use the pictures below
- Pen/Pencil
- Paper

Length of Activity

40 minutes

Procedure

- Get familiar with the compass, establish which way is North. The red part of the needle on your compass will always point North.
- After establishing North, you can use the acronym “**N**ever **E**at **S**oggy **W**affles” which gives you the order of the directional terms. North, East, South, West.
- Pick which person is going to hide the food items and which person will be the “fox” hunting for food.
- Hide the food items around the house or outside. But don’t let the “fox” see where they are hidden!
- Establish a den, or center point, just like a fox. This will be the base you will use to figure out the primary directions (North, South, East and West). The den will be the center point that the fox will need to always return to after finding food so they can “eat” the food and find the next food item.
- Have the “fox” start at the den and let them know how many of the food items they are going to look for.
- The fox will need a pen/pencil, a piece of paper and the compass. Once the fox finds a food item they need to write it down as well as the direction where the food was found (EX: Rabbit was found in the northeastern direction).
- The fox returns to their den and “eats” the food item, then goes out looking for more food.
- Continue the above procedures until all the food items have been found.
- Then switch positions and take turns learning how to use the compass.



