Camo Egg Hunt

Teacher-led Classroom/Field Activity
Science/Research/Inquiry/Art

How does color help hide coastal bird eggs from predators?

Objective
Students will create cryptically* colored eggs and find out how well they blend in.

Students will need:
• Hard-boiled eggs (one per student)
• Colored felt-tip pens

Suggested time:
Time for field trip (45-60 minutes) to a nearby location and follow-up discussion

What to do:
1. In advance, scout out a good place for the activity. The more varied the landscape the better. The idea is to have enough different nest sites to make the activity fun and meaningful. A green uniform lawn won't work, for example, since all the eggs would be colored green. A park with rocky, leaf-covered, grassy, and sandy areas works well. Even a playground will work if there's enough variety—red bench, sandbox, gravel, etc. Once chosen, arrange for a field trip and transport to the site.

2. Tell students they'll be going on a field trip to hide and then find camouflaged eggs. Ask the class: How do birds that nest on the ground keep predators from finding their eggs? Introduce the concept of cryptic coloring: *the natural selection of colors that hide or camouflage something.

3. At the site, give each student a hard-boiled egg and coloring pens. Have each student initial his or her egg in small letters on one side of the egg.

4. Direct students to choose "nest sites" within a designated area. Then challenge them to color their eggs so that they disappear into the background of their nest sites. Instruct them to leave their eggs with their initials down.

5. Gather the class after all the eggs are colored and placed. As a class, have students fan out and find the eggs. Younger kids can simply gather them up. With older students, consider having each student find one egg that's not his or hers and then stay there until everyone has found one. Then students can "tour" the eggs and see how well they blend in. (Make sure all the eggs have been collected before leaving!)

6. Back in class, have students share which eggs blended in best and why.

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