BC Parks believes that youth are a key audience to encourage lifelong appreciation and use of our provincial parks. These games and activities provide some affordable and versatile youth activity ideas.

**Predator -Prey**

*Activity Type:* Active - running, hiding, sensory perception and animal role-playing.

*Suggested Age and time:* 13 years and up. Allow at least 30 minutes of play.

*Materials:* Flags, coloured shirts, “life tags” or chips (made out of card stock)

*Recommended environment:* A relatively large area with defined boundaries and both clear and sheltered areas (for hiding places) - (park campgrounds & day-use areas).

*Note:* Choose an area where players will not disturb or damage sensitive undergrowth

*Overview:* An exciting game needing little preparation. Predator-Prey teaches youth about the complexities of the food chain by assigning participants roles that affect how they can play the game. Primary predators must find & catch prey; participants lower on the food chain must avoid predators while also meeting their own needs. Each participant learns that it is not easy to survive, even if you are a predator.

*Object:* To “survive” by avoiding being eaten, destroyed by disease or natural disaster, and getting enough food and water. The species with the most life tags at the end wins.

*Directions:* Youth must be told to bring a green, black, or red shirt (it is best to have lots of green, many black and a few red):

- Green shirts are “frogs” and are given 20 Life tags (small pieces of Bristol board) and go off and hide as best they can.
- Black shirts are “raccoons” and are given 10 life tags. They go off after the frogs have a 5-10 minute head start.
- Red shirts are “foxes” and are given 5 life tags. They go after the coons have a 5-10 minute head start.

Frogs cannot eat coons or foxes. Coons can eat frogs but not foxes. Foxes can eat coons & frogs.

People run around trying to collect life tags and not lose them. If you are caught by an animal that can eat you must give that player a life tag. Leaders can run around being “natural disasters” like hurricanes and disease or human pressures like cars or urban growth. They can take a life tag from any animal they see. Animals of a common species can trade life tags to stay alive. If you run out of life tags you must return to home base and either do something to earn another life tag or wait for game to finish. The species with most life tags at the end wins.
Variations: Set up “food” & “water” stations for animals lower on the food chain to collect (predators will get “food” from the life tags of the prey). “Food” & “water” can be chips or a coloured felt can be used to make a tally mark on the participants’ skin. Predators will learn to ambush these stations, but must leave them to get water and to engage in a chase. Make sure you make enough “food” stations scattered about so that they all cannot be ambushed continually by predators. Food and water chips can be traded in for life tags.

Making the most of this game: At the end of the game, discuss predator/prey relationships throughout nature and how they can fluctuate.

Educational Explanation: Predation is an important evolutionary force: natural selection favors more effective predators & more evasive prey (i.e. easily captured prey are eliminated, and prey with effective defenses (like camouflage or speed) survive). Prey can evolve behaviours to reduce vulnerability, but predators, too, adapt to different behaviours or other available prey species.

Predator/prey relationships reflect the balance between population size of predators in an area and population size of prey in the same area. As predator numbers increase, the numbers of prey decrease due to hunting pressure. This pressure will push the population of prey so low that there will not be enough food for the predators, causing them to starve and decreasing population size. Then, as predator populations decrease, the prey population will increase (due to lower hunting pressure). As prey populations grow again, this increases the amount of food available for the predators, and predator populations will start to increase also. Viola, we are back at the beginning: as predators increase in population size, the extra hunting pressure starts to lower prey populations.

Post-Game Discussion Questions:
• What did this game teach you about predator-prey interactions?
• How did you feel being high on the food chain? Low on the food chain?
• What was most difficult for you about this game?
• Do you think this game reflects the challenge animals face in survival? Why or why not?

Make your trip to BC Parks FUN and SAFE. Visit our safety page for tips and important considerations for using provincial parks.

http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/safety/visit_safe.html