Camouflage Caterpillars

An active game that develops understanding of adaptation and encourages maths in play

Biodiversity & Interdependence

This activity has good links with **animal adaptation** and it is an active demonstration of a simple **food chain**.
Tree ➡ Caterpillar ➡ Blue Tit ➡ Sparrow Hawk
It is also a rich context for **number processes** work. Consider: a single blue tit chick can eat as many as 100 caterpillars per day. A blue tit brood can be as large as 10 so with both mother and father blue tit foraging all day they need to find 500 caterpillars each. The brood will typically take 20 days to fledge so that equates to 20,000 caterpillars by the end. This is before they have even fed themselves!

Pupils could try to work out how their rate of finding woollen caterpillars compares to a blue tit by working out roughly how many caterpillars a real blue tit would find per hour/half hour.
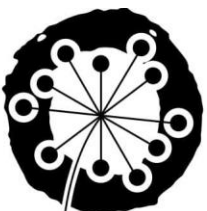
Equipment

- Different lengths and colours of wool including green
- A varied open space

Activity

1. Split the children into two equal groups.
2. Let each person take a number of 'caterpillars' or 'worms' that they will hide (can be a good link to multiplication e.g. if we all take two how many have we got?)
3. The two groups hide their woollen strands in separate areas of the grounds.
4. When all worms are hidden, explain that the groups have now become hungry birds.
5. The two groups need to swap areas and try to find as many of the other group's strands as possible in the time allowed.
6. Discuss which were easier to find and why.

Extension

1. Use only short lengths of green wool and hide a series of strands along a hedgerow.
2. The participants walk slowly and quietly along the hedgerow to see how many 'caterpillars' they can spot along the route and then compare their abilities to those of a blue tit (see the info box.)

For more resources visit www.ltl.org.uk/free-resources

Learning through Landscapes