



"Hunting" For Ants

We have many species of ants in Colorado. This activity will take your kids outside looking for ants and observing their behavior. Ants are social insects that live in large colonies and have developed a complex system of communicating with one another.

It will be a fascinating and learning experience for your child, and also a chance to apply the scientific method of inquiry!

Materials

- magnifying lenses
- one (or more) paper plates previously divided into fourths w/ a marker
- four (or more) food items: ripe fruit, bread/bread crumbs, pieces of cheese, grass, ...
- blank sheet of paper

Procedure

1. Ask your child what ants look like. If they have seen an ant recently, where was it? What was the ant doing? Tell her that she will become an explorer scientist and learn about ants.

2. Show your child the collection of food items you have prepared. Ask her to make guesses (these are hypothesis) on which foods ants would prefer, and why.



3. Go outside for a and "hunt" taking the plate with food with you. Look for an anthill, or for ants on the sidewalk, in the grass, etc. Remind your child that ants are living creatures and need to be treated with respect.

4. When you child finds an ant or anthill, instruct her to place the plate with food close to it. While you wait for the ant(s) to locate the food, encourage your child to observe the ants and their behavior (older children could record their findings in a journal). Are there different sizes of ants (the great majority will be workers – depending on the time of the year there could also be winged males)? How does the ant behavior change when they discover the food?

5. Count the ants as they arrive at the different foods. You or your child record the results on the sheet of paper (this is data collection).



6. Tally the results. Were your hypothesis correct? Which food did the ants prefer? Explain to your child that the process they just went through (formulating hypothesis, testing their hypothesis, making conclusions) is the same process scientists go through when studying nature.

7. (Optional). Back at home, encourage your child to draw pictures of the ants she saw. Point out the ants, like all insect, have 3 body parts (head, thorax and abdomen) and six legs.

Extensions

If there is a anthill close to your house, encourage your child to visit it often, keeping a journal. They can also write or draw a story.

Suggested Reading: *If I Were an Ant* by Amy Moses

Activity adapted from: "Growing Up Wild"