

NATURE'S CAMOUFLAGE

Nearly all wild creatures have a means of protecting themselves against their natural enemies. This diorama illustrates the natural camouflage markings and coloration some animals and insects have which makes them hard to see, keeping them safe from predators.

WOODCOCK

The dull, mottled coloring of the long-billed **American Woodcock** (*Philohela minor*) makes the bird blend well with leaves on the forest floor where it searches for food. It prefers to live in damp woodlands, living on bugs and worms for most of its life.

WHIP-POOR-WILL

The other bird blending so well with its woodland surroundings is the **Whip-poor-will** (*Caprimulgidae vociferus*). A bird of prey flying above would certainly have difficulty seeing this resident of the "edge of the woods" habitat. By living along the border of a woods, the bird can easily search adjacent fields for insects, its principal food. The **Whip-poor-will** received its common name from its call. The pleasant melodious call or whistle repeated at dusk and sometimes at dawn sounds as though the bird is repeating the words "Whip poor will." The bird makes its nest on the ground in May and young hatch in June.

SKIPPERS

Two small, drab-colored butterflies known as **Skippers** (family *Hesperiidae*) are resting on the dead twigs in one corner. At first glance, the **Skippers** appear to be last year's leaves which haven't dropped off. Of the 3500 species of **Skippers**, most feed on nectar from wild and domestic flowers. Females lay their eggs singly directly on host broadleaved plants which then provide food for the newly hatched larva.

WOOD SATYR

The larger butterfly with "eyespot" on the edge of its wings is the **Wood Satyr** (*Satyridae*). There are four species, with most appearing in the western portion of the USA. **Satyrs** are grass eaters and they can be seen flying in a jerky, bouncing fashion over lawns, pastures and meadows.

CICADA

The **Whip-poor-will** holds a **Cicada** in its bill. When an adult cicada first emerges from its underground home, it is white and soft. Soon a new outer shell, the exoskeleton, forms and hardens, turning a dark color. Its wings let it fly into trees where it emits a

loud whirring sound to attract a mate.

GRASSHOPPER

Two brown colored, Short-Horned Grasshoppers (family *Locustidae*) are included in the diorama. They are hard to see even though out in the open. This insect can jump long distances. Sometimes flocks of these insects can destroy farm crops. Most species live and die in the field where they hatched.

WALKINGSTICK

A **Walkingstick** (family *Phasmidae*) perches on a twig which it closely resembles in shape and color. Basically, it remains still during the daytime as protection. At night it crawls about on branches and twigs eating leaves, its main food. Only several species exist in the U.S.

LITTLE BROWN BAT

Little Brown Bats (*Myotis lucifugus*) are mammals, but because of their flying abilities and unique characteristics they are in the group, Chiroptera. **Bats** have unusual facial characteristics, such as long noses, enormous ears, sharp teeth and long tongues to help them locate food. Most **Bats** eat insects, but some eat fruit, fish, flower nectar, blood, rodents and even other bats. They live in diverse habitats, such as caves, trees, chimneys, and belfries. They rest during the day, hanging head down using their strong, hooked claws to cling to stones, bricks or branches. They are hunted by other night fliers, such as owls.

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Cleveland Museum of NATURAL HISTORY



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COMMON NIGHTHAWK

Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Caprimulgiformes
Family: Caprimulgidae
Genus: *Chordeiles*
Species: *minor*

The Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*), native to the Americas, is in Ohio during its breeding season, our summer. Otherwise, this medium-sized nightjar resides in South America to beat our winter. The Common Nighthawk is often called a "goatsucker" from the mistaken belief that they will suck milk from goats! The adults have brown feathers, black feathers, and even white feathers! This bird is so well camouflaged in its natural habitat of open country, that you will lose site of it if you stand just 20 feet away from the diorama. This is bad news for the predators who may prefer this bird for prey. Look for the Common Nighthawk at dawn and dusk hunting for insects on the wing (while flying). Listen for a "zzpeet" sound overhead and near street lighting too.

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER

Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Charadriiformes
Family: Charadriidae
Genus: *Charadrius*
Species: *semipalmatus*

The Semipalmated Plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) passes by Cleveland in the spring and fall during migration. This unique shorebird has been spotted swimming short distances while foraging for food, such as insects. The Semipalmated Plover builds its nests on beaches and flats across northern Canada and Alaska! Placing its nest directly on the ground would seem dangerous, but the Semipalmated Plover is equipped with plumage coloring that matches its environment. Adults have a greyish-brown back and wings, with a white belly and white breast divided by one black neckband. This bird closely resembles the Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*), but the smaller plover only has one neck band, while the larger Killdeer has two bands.

WHITE-FOOTED MOUSE

Phylum: Chordata
Class: Mammalia
Order: Rodentia
Family: Cricetidae
Genus: *Peromyscus*
Species: *leucopus*

The White-Footed Mouse (*Peromyscus leucopus*) is one of the most common animals in the wooded areas of Ohio, although it can make its home anywhere, including fields, ditches, barns, city parks and houses. Its color is reddish-brown or cinnamon above, with a broad, dark brown band down the back. The belly and feet are immaculately white. The upper surface of the tail is brown and the under surface is grayish-white. The White-Footed Mouse eats seeds, nuts, berries, fruits, insects and larvae. White-Footed Mice nest under hollow logs, in hollow stumps, and even in reconstructed bird nests, woodpecker holes or buildings. Practically all soft materials available are used for nest construction. The female usually gives birth to 3-6 live young.

UNDERWING MOTHS

Phylum: Anthropoda
Class: Insecta
Order: Lepidoptera
Family: Noctuidae
Genus: *Catocala*
Species:

Two large, drab-colored moths known as Underwings are resting on the dead branch in the center. These moths are in the "owlet" family. At first glance, the moths appear to be last year's leaves which haven't dropped off. Of the over 200,000 species of moths, most are nocturnal. Differentiating moths from butterflies can be tricky business. Visually, moths will often rest with their wings flat. Butterflies will often rest with their wings upright. About 100 kinds of *Catocala* moths are found north of Mexico. They are rarely seen however because in daylight they rest well camouflaged on tree trunks with their underwings hidden. The bright hindwings (underwings) are not visible at rest, hiding the moth from predators.



RELATED MATERIALS

ACTIVITY GUIDES

- Balick, D. **Animal Survival, from Camouflage to Claws.** Part of the “Science with Simple Things” Series. A new project on every page related to animal survival. Many line drawings and diagrams. 45 pages.
- OBIS (Outdoor Biology Instructional Strategies). **Invent an Animal Adaptation.** Four-page pamphlet that encourages students to invent an imaginary animal that is camouflaged from its enemies by blending into its habitat.
- VanCleave, J. Animals: **Spectacular Science Projects.** This book is filled with different projects, including one project entitled “Polka Dots” which explores how chameleons change color.

PICTURE BOOKS

- Cherfas, J. **Animal Defenses: How Animals Behave.** This book provides a detailed description of various forms of animal behaviors and defenses. Many color photos and color illustrations accompany the text. 32 pages.
- Duprez, M. **Animals in Disguise.** Nine different animals are highlighted in this beautifully illustrated book, which includes much detailed information about each animal, including the Walkingstick. 43 pages.
- McDonnell, J. **Animal Camouflage.** This book is filled with many photographs showing different animals’ camouflage, including the Walkingstick and Wood Satyr. Readable text accompanies the photos. 47 pages.
- Powzyk, J. **Animal Camouflage: A Closer Look.** Through beautiful color illustrations and vivid text, the author shows how basic types of camouflage are used to help animals hide all over the world. 40 pages.
- Sowler, Sandie. **Amazing Animal Disguises:** An Eyewitness Juniors book. With the use of photos and illustrations, as well as ample descriptive text, this book provides much information on animal disguises. 29 pages.