



Nature Nuggets: Slinky Snakes

Audience: 3-7 year olds and parents/guardians.

Theme: Snakes are very cool animals that need to be respected, but not feared.

Materials:

Blanket for sitting

Hide and Snake story book

Laminated snake pictures (Rattlesnake, Bull Snake, and Garter Snake)

Snake skins

Copy of “In the eyes of the rattlesnake” story

Snake stuffed animal with rattle

Food cards (frogs, toads, mice) – Hide before the program starts

Coiled snake cut-outs (white paper)

Crayons and markers

Googly eyes

Glue

Scissors

INTRODUCTION

Read “Hide and Snake” picture book with kids. Let them look for the snake on each page. Ask them if they like snakes. Take some examples of why they do or don’t like snakes. Most people are very afraid of snakes, but they are actually a quite cool animal. Let’s learn what makes snakes so different and special!

What makes a snake?

Explain that there are different types of snakes. In Fort Collins we have 3 kinds: bull snakes, garter snakes, and rattlesnakes. Show kids pictures of each kind of snake.

Ask the children:

- *What colors do they see on each one?*
- *What makes a snake different from people?* (No arms or legs, scales, eat food whole, slither on the ground, need sun to warm themselves, shed their skin etc.)
- *Are there any ways snakes are like people?* (Both are animals, have live babies, like to swim, awake during the day, etc.)

Show the snake skin and allow kids to ask questions.

In the eyes of the Rattlesnake

Ask the children:

- *How would you feel if you were out hiking and came across a rattlesnake all coiled up and shaking its rattle?*
- *How would the rattlesnake feel?* (Rattle snakes feel very much the same about people as we usually do about them.)

Let’s experience what it’s like to be a rattlesnake. Have the kids lie down (they can sit up if they want), close their eyes, and relax. Ask them to listen to the story and imagine what they are hearing. Read them ‘In the Eyes of a Rattlesnake,’ using the snake stuffed animal to make the rattle sound to emphasize the rattlesnakes’ warning rattle and stomp the ground for the giant’s footsteps. Ask them to sit up and open their eyes after the story is over. Ask them some questions:

- *How did it feel to be a rattlesnake?*
- *Did you enjoy sunning yourself on the sand?*
- *What did it feel like when the giant arrived?*
- *What did you want to do?*
- *If rattlesnakes could talk like people, what do you think they would say to us?*
- *What do you think the rattlesnake thinks about people?*

This is a good time to talk about snake safety. What do you do if you see a snake? Use the story they just heard to help them understand that the snake really just wants to be left alone and will not harm them unless they give it a very good reason to do so. Make sure throughout the program that the kids learn to leave snakes alone, even though they are learning to like them.

ACTIVITY

Favorite Foods Hunt

Ask if they have a favorite food and take some examples. Ask if anyone knows what the favorite food of snakes might be? (Frogs, toads, mice are their favorite). Play a game where the kids go “hunt” for food. (Note: hide “food” pictures before the program starts). Set boundaries of where the food is hidden and remind kids to stay inside the boundaries as they hunt for food. After 5 minutes, bring the group back together and let the kids share what food they found.

CRAFT

Make a snake

Everyone gets to make a snake to take home with them. Give each kid a white piece of paper with a snake on it. Before they cut it out, have each kid color their snake and give it googly eyes. Once they are finished, have them cut along the line of the coil. Now they have their very own pet snake!

CONCLUSION

Bring the group back together.

Ask the children:

- *What did you learn about snakes today?*
- *Did you change your mind from what you thought about snakes at the beginning of the program?*
- *How will you be safe around snakes?*

Thank everyone for coming and learning about snakes. Encourage kids and parents to come to other programs and remind the parents of up-coming programs with the Natural Areas.