

Wake Up Bear!

Activity

Resource:

Beyond the Walls: Activities for the Outdoors

Grade(s): 7 8

Division(s): Intermediate

Setting: Curricular

Season: Spring

Activity Goal

Participants learn about population dynamics in ecosystems in this high-energy activity as they search for resources.

For participant safety, please review the contents of the [Beyond the Walls: Safety Considerations](#) page for information on Safety Standards, Spring Safety Considerations, and Outdoor Playing Areas and Surfaces.

Equipment

Pinnies (1 per participant for half of the participants)

Before Play

- Review the safety rules and activity instructions with participants prior to the activity.
- Establish the boundaries for the designated playing area and share them with participants.

- Introduce participants to the ecological concept of population dynamics; that all life requires the right number of predators, prey, and resources (i.e., food, water, and shelter) to remain in balance. Explain the principle of hibernation and hibernating animals, and that spring is a time when many animals, like black bears, are coming out of hibernation (and are hungry!)
- Encourage participants to identify possible limiting factors of population (i.e., disease, famine, drought, overhunting, overpopulation) and how it might impact the population of the bears. Explain that this activity models what could happen year to year to the provincial bear population.

During Play

- Participants stand shoulder to shoulder to form a circle and then take six large steps backward.
- Provide every other participant with a pinnie. These participants are the 'bears'. The remaining participants are the resources that bears would need to survive.
- Participants face away from the centre of the circle. When participants hear the teacher call the words, 'Wake up bears!', they all perform a jump to turn and face the middle of the circle while showing one of three signals: 1) hands over stomach (food), 2) hands over mouth (water), or 3) hands in a peak over their head (shelter).
- 'Bears' must safely tag a participant (a resource) who shows the same signal they are showing. These 'resources' now become 'bears', and will don their own pinnie. Bears unable to find the resource they require will 'die' and become a resource instead. They remove their pinnie. Remind participants that a tag is a touch on the back, shoulder, or arm not a push, punch, or grab.
- Any participant who does not establish a resource-bear partnership will rejoin their spot on the circle.
- Play continues until there are no resources left, and the bear population 'collapses' due to a lack of resources.
- Resume play after re-distributing pinnies to only half of the group.
- After two to three rounds of play, introduce the next three components of the game. Explain that in every population, there are times when resources become scarce, or absent all together. This could include, but are not limited to:

- 'Famine!': this means that food is not available. Participants would signal this sign by crossing their arms in front of their stomachs.
 - 'Drought!': this means that water is not available. Participants would signal this sign by crossing their arms above their heads.
 - 'Fire!': this means that shelter is not available. Participants would signal this sign by holding their arms straight out at the sides, as if to make the letter T.
- During subsequent rounds, after 'Wake up bears!', explain to participants that they can also choose to make the sign for 'Famine', 'Drought' or 'Fire' as well. If the resources have signaled for the corresponding food, water, or shelter, they must all perform 10 repetitions of a pre-selected activity such as [Ophea's 50 Fitness activities](#) rather than partner up with a bear. They then return to play in the next round.
 - All bears searching for the resource in question 'die' and become a resource instead.

After Play

Use the following prompts for participants to reflect on ways to be active in spring and engage others in activity to build a habit of engaging in outdoor activity throughout the year.

Question prompts:

- How did playing this game teach you about population dynamics in the natural environment? Which other predator-prey relationships might this game apply to?
- What are other important things that happen in spring in the natural world (e.g., babies are born)? How might these things impact how the harvest of species is regulated (e.g., food may be scarce or available resources could be in high demand, so hunting is heavily regulated, and focuses outside of this time period for many species)?
- How could we change or alter this game in an active way to add in the other impacts on population dynamics that we discussed earlier (e.g., disease: all participants run around the outside of the circle in a clockwise direction, and play 'resets' to a 50/50 split of bears and resources)?

Adaptations

Consider these tips to maximize the challenge and the fun for participants.

- To increase the challenge, consider having participants perform 'bear walks' as they try to establish partnerships between bears and resources. Remind participants to keep their heads up to ensure there are no collisions!
- To increase the physical challenge of this activity, consider making the circle for play even bigger than six steps. Ensure participants know that they must run with their heads up while traveling through the playing area to ensure their safety and the safety of others and encourage resources to evade capture by running around the playing area. Consider adding hoops in two to three locations to provide a 'safe spot' for participants.

Modifications

Consider these tips to maximize inclusion and fun for all participants.

- For participants with mobility challenges, consider decreasing the size of the circle so the distance required to travel is decreased.
- For participants that are blind/low vision, consider providing each student with three different noise makers/bells. Instruct them to ring/shake each item in correspondence with food, water, and shelter.
- Consider providing an implement to participants with mobility issues to extend their reach when 'tagging' resources (i.e., pool noodle).