

Crab Camo



VIRGINIA
AQUARIUM
& MARINE SCIENCE CENTER

Students will create their own decorator crab using made man and natural materials to blend in with their environment.

Duration

Preparation: 5 minutes

Activity: 60 minutes

Supplies

- Paper plates
- Crayons or markers
- Scissors
- Pipe cleaners (green, brown, or black)
- Popsicle sticks (optional)
- Tape
- Glue
- Camouflage materials (grass, flowers, leaves, pine needles, rocks, etc.)

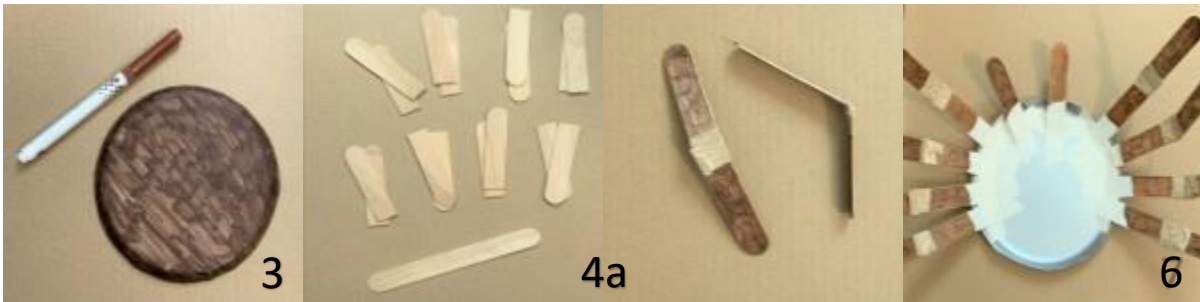
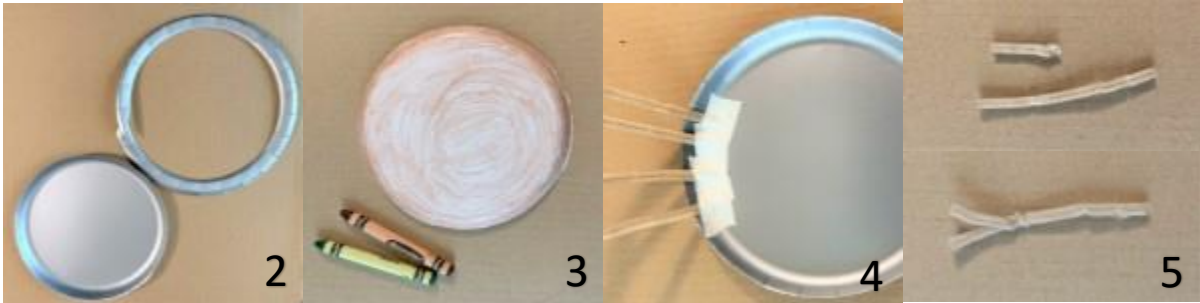
Background

Spider crabs, also known as decorator crabs, are masters of **camouflage** because they are **prey** animals. They use their scissor like claws to collect things like sea grass, sea anemone, and barnacles, then apply a sticky spit to the items and stick them on their spiky backs. By using objects found in their environment, these **invertebrates** can hide their bodies from **predators** who might want to eat them. In this activity students will create their own spider crab and decorate them to blend into a natural **environment** of their choice.

Instructions

1. Collect your materials. For younger students, crayons and pipe cleaners are ideal. Older students may use markers and popsicle sticks. Have students brainstorm outdoor environments they want their crab to hide in.
2. Cut the edge of the paper plate away to create a domed shell for the crab.
3. Color the back of the paper plate using colors that would blend with the chosen hiding spot.
4. Attach 8 pipe cleaners to the underside of the plate using tape. There should be 4 pipe cleaners per side.
 - a. For older students, take 8 popsicle sticks and cut them in half. Reattach with tape with a slit bend to mimic the joints of the crab. Color using the same marker used for the body. Attach with tape to the underside of the plate, 4 to each side.
5. To create the scissor claws, cut about 2 inches down two pipe cleaners. Twist the smaller cut piece around the longer piece to create a y shape.
 - a. For older students, cut one more popsicle stick in half.
6. Attach the claws to the underside of the plate towards the “front”.
7. Flip the crab over and test how it stands. Reposition any legs to create a stable crab.
8. Go outside and collect natural elements to attach to the crab. This could be grass, flowers, weeds, leaves, straw, pine needles, small rocks, etc.

9. Apply glue to the top of the crab in sections. Before the glue dries, attach the materials collected outside. Continue until the top of the crab is covered.
10. Take the crab outside and place in the chosen environment. How well does the crab blend in? Would a predator be able to find the crab? If yes, what could be changed to help the crab hide better? See if family or friends can spot the crab!



Vocabulary

Camouflage: the hiding or disguising of something by covering it up or changing the way it looks

Environment: the space where a person, animal, or plant lives

Predator: an animal that hunts and consumes other animals

Prey: an animal that is hunted and consumed by other animals

Invertebrate: an animal that does not have a backbone

Extension

Create a game with the finished crabs! Have one student hide the crabs and then let the other students try to find them. Crabs can also be made to camouflage inside using items found around the classroom or house.