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## Hop, Flutter, Crawl: Interpreting Insects for Children

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Hop,



Flutter,



Crawl:

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Photos by D. L. Kulhavy.

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Many young children see insects as "bugs" that should either be run from in terror or stepped on. Often, this is an attitude that they have learned from their parents and teachers. Television commercials for insecticides have conditioned consumers to believe that the only good bug is a dead bug. Most have no idea of the importance of insects in natural eco-systems.

As interpreters our aim should be to overcome these attitudes and develop a positive outlook on the world of insects. The following program was developed primarily to introduce young children (ages 3-7) to three concepts:

- 1) insect movement and locomotion,
- 2) insect life cycles, and
- 3) respect for insects.

In the belief that activity is essential in the teaching of young children the concept of motion is approached by introducing them to Hop, Flutter, and Crawl. *Hop* Grasshopper, is portrayed by a full color painting of a grasshopper sitting and hopping. *Flutter* Butterfly and *Crawl* Caterpillar are represented by pictures and reinforced by a stuffed animal that converts from a caterpillar to a butterfly. We found that pictures or stuffed animals are more desirable than living specimens in this program since they are larger and more durable.

The activity is begun by showing the children either a picture or a model with a short discussion of how the insect moves from one place to another. As each picture is discussed, the leader points to the locomotive activity (Hop, Flutter, or Crawl), then demonstrates the movement. While showing the picture of the grasshopper, the leader demonstrates hopping (two feet for young children). He then encourages the children to try hopping like a grasshopper. After a few moments of enthusiastic hopping the interpreter holds up the flutter poster and in a loud voice asks, "What is this?". Response: "It's a butterfly!" Then the discussion of moths or butterflies fluttering en-

sues with a demonstration followed by the children's participation in fluttering. Crawl is performed similarly with the children and leader crawling (if the surface permits).

After all three activities have been performed, the youngsters are divided into three groups by giving each a laminated card with either a grasshopper, a butterfly (or moth) or a caterpillar pictures on one side and the word hop, flutter or crawl lettered on the other side. If three leaders are present the children are told to go to the leader that is doing the activity their card represents while performing the activity themselves (i.e. hop to the leader). If time permits, the children exchange cards and repeat the activity.

Following this activity, the group can be shown the idea of metamorphosis (growing up) in insects as Crawl Caterpillar changes into Flutter Butterfly. An excellent story which can be read at this point is "Backyard Insects" by Millicent E. Selsam and Ronald Goor (Scholastic Book Service, New York, 1981).

Several insects either alive or pinned in a collection may be displayed at this time. We have found that unique and beneficial insects such as butterflies, preying mantids, ladybugs, and honeybees are especially useful in developing the final concept of respect for and admiration of the beauty of insects. Time is set aside for asking the children to share any experience they may have had with insects such as seeing a butterfly on a flower or watching ants work.

If the program is conducted in a classroom environment we feel that it is important to leave a memento of our visit. An especially useful present is a cocoon that will develop into a moth. When the moth emerges it will once again reinforce the idea of flutter. An ant colony can be used to reinforce crawl and either grasshoppers or crickets can demonstrate hop.

Your enthusiasm as an interpreter will be passed on to the children—after all, insects are really beautiful and beneficial!

# Interpreting Insects for Children