

## Protect the Nest

Most animals have ways of avoiding their predators. Most wildlife is also very protective of its young. In this game participants will examine predator/prey relationships. They will discover how predators become smarter with experience. Predators can learn to work as a pack against the lone protector to distract and steal. The prey might also become smarter by developing different strategies to protect its eggs from predators.

Canada geese generally start breeding at three years of age. They have many natural predators. Raccoons, skunks, foxes, crows, and snakes prey on goose eggs; snapping turtles, foxes, bobcats, hawks, coyotes, and raccoons prey on goslings; and coyotes, bobcats, and people prey on the adults.

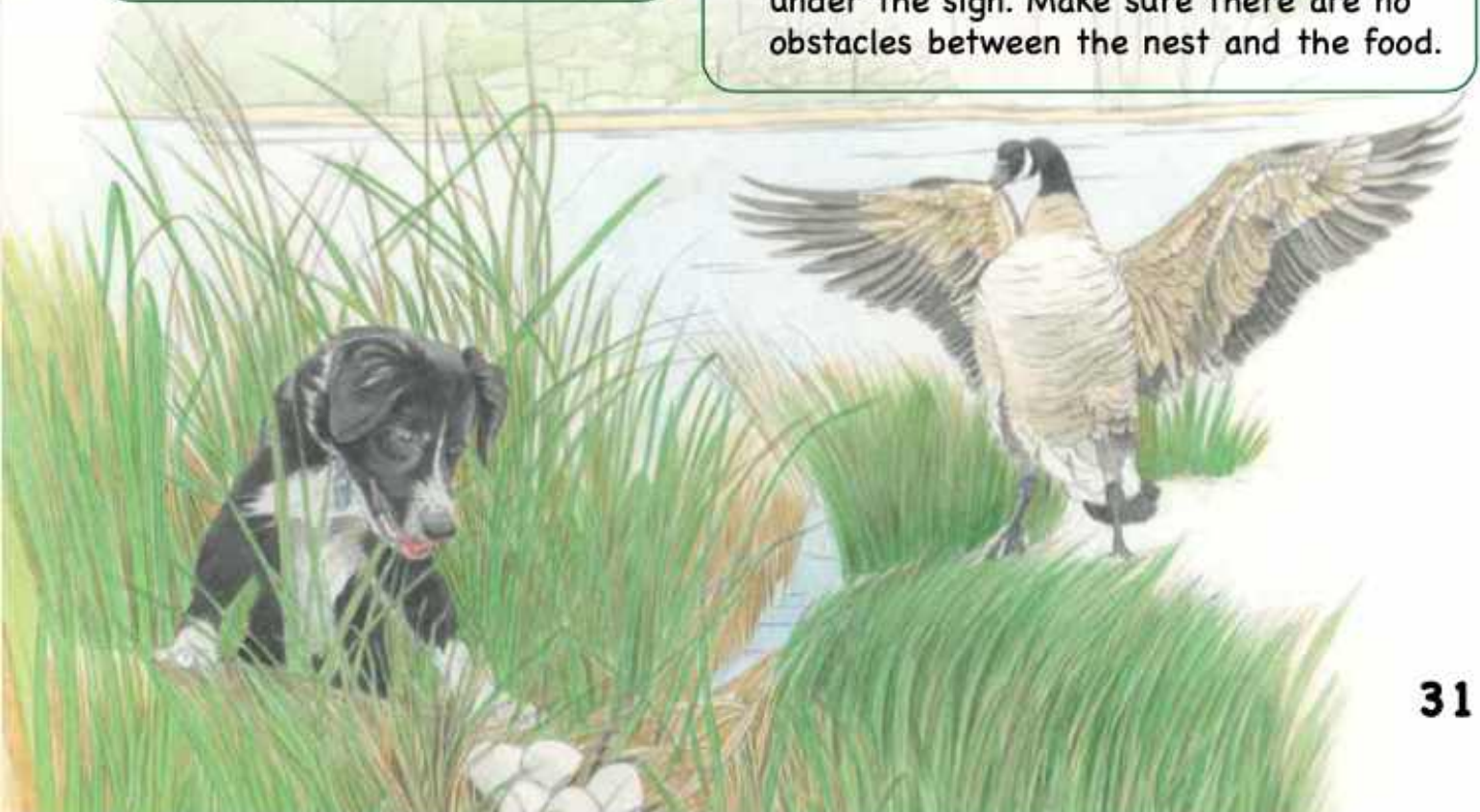
**Objective:** Participants examine the relationship between predator and prey.

### Materials needed:

- Rope
- 5 tennis balls
- Laminated sign labelled "Food"
- Basket holding a quantity of small items (plastic beads or pennies) placed under the sign.

### Preparation:

1. Use the rope to mark out a circle in the middle of a wide room. This will be the "nest".
2. Place the tennis balls in the center of the circle. These are the "eggs".
3. Hang the "food" sign in a corner of the room. Place the basket with "food" items under the sign. Make sure there are no obstacles between the nest and the food.







## Activity

1. Choose two students to be Mama bird and Daddy bird. They will stay in the rope circle to protect their nest and eggs.
2. The other students are predators that eat birds' eggs. These predators will try to steal the eggs.
3. The parent birds must defend their nest but also need to leave and find food to eat. Each bird takes a turn running/flying to the food pile and returning to the nest so the other parent bird can go get food.
4. As the predators try to steal eggs out of the nest, the parent bird guarding the nest will try to tag them. Geese have very powerful beaks, and if the bird touches the predator, the predator must sit out the rest of the game. These predators are after the eggs so no touching the parent bird as it runs/flies to get food!
5. After playing the game, ask the following questions:
  - a. What made the game easy for the predators?
  - b. Is there anything the predators did to get smarter at stealing the eggs? What did they do?
  - c. Did the parent birds think of better ways to guard their nest? Which strategies worked best?
  - d. Can you think of animals that travel in packs and work together to catch their prey?
  - e. What other animals that are sneaky or smart when going after their prey?

