An ecosystem is made up of several living organisms that all have interactions with each other. Each organism has essential needs that it requires in order to survive. The following activities will highlight the needs that organisms have and how they interact with one another.

**Vocabulary terms used in this activity:**
- **Predator** – An animal that hunts another animal
- **Prey** – An animal that can be hunted
- **Camouflage** – the ability to blend in with one’s surroundings and hide
- **Defense Mechanism** – an automatic reaction of the body in defense of itself.
- **Mimicry** – when an animal copies physical or behavioral traits that other animals use in order to survive
Predator/Prey Field Study

All living organisms have essential needs in order to survive. Fill in the blanks with the appropriate needs.

All living things need:

W_ _ _ _
F_ _ _
S_ _ _ _ _

In order to get all of these essential needs, living organisms will have some kind of interaction with other living organisms. Some animals will need to hunt other animals for food and other animals will try to avoid becoming food. We use the terms **predator** and **prey** to describe these animals. Draw an example of a predator and a prey below.

**Predator**

**Prey**

Answer Key: Water, Food, Shelter
Draw the Ultimate Predator

Create a predator that is ferocious, sneaky, or strong. Make sure it can safely get away from other animals that may be trying to hunt it as well. Don’t forget to include adaptations like camouflage, sharp teeth, claws, or beaks, defense mechanisms, and biomimicry.

After drawing your predator, share it with the class.
Camouflage Hide and Seek

- Cut a piece of white paper into approximately 2x2 inch squares.
- Color the squares with crayons or markers so that they will be camouflaged in different parts of the house. Tape the squares to the various items in the house. For example, a brown square would be placed on a brown bookcase, a pink square on a pink wall, a striped square on a striped pillow case, and so on.
- Count how many total squares you hide throughout the house and then have your family try to find them all. If you’d like, have someone else in the family be the hider next and you seek.

Predator–Prey War Card Game

- Find an old set of cards that your parents don’t mind if you write on them.
- With a marker write a kind of animal on each card. Think of as much variety as you can. Name insects, fish, snakes, turtles, frogs, small mammals, large mammals, birds. Try to keep to animals that live in Illinois.
- Shuffle the cards and pass them out between two people until you have handed out all the cards.
- Play this game like the card game War. As you each flip a card down, the winner of the two cards is the one that has the predator that would have eaten the other card’s prey animal. If you think it is a tie, then place another card on top and winner takes all.