

# *Hungry Cave Animals!*

By Katy Key (Grades PreK–6)

**KEYWORDS:** food chain/web, isopod, blind cavefish, blind crayfish, little brown bat, amphipod, copepod, microorganisms

**OVERVIEW:** Students will learn about animals living in the cave, and the cave food chain.

**STANDARDS:**

**TIME:** 30–50 minutes, everything in bold is said by instructor

**MATERIALS:**

–1 spool of yarn

–Picture/name of the following animals (1 per child): plant debris, microorganisms, isopod, amphipod, copepod, blind cavefish, blind crayfish, little brown bat, frog, catfish, sunlight, mosquito, surface crayfish, salamander, snake

**OBJECTIVES:**

The student will

1. Use reasoning to determine what their creature can eat/what they are eaten by.
2. Understand the food web between the animals in the cave system.
3. Discuss cave animals with the class.

**SUGGESTED PROCEDURES:**

**OPENING**

**Discuss with students the main types of animals in the cave. Show a picture of the blind cavefish, blind crayfish, little brown bat, and salamander. Explain to students that the white color of the blind cavefish and crayfish comes from them being in total darkness, and not developing any pigment in their skin. Also explain that isopods are microscopic creatures living on top of the water surface, that cavefish and crayfish feed on.**

**DEVELOPMENT**

**–Tell students that they are going to be representing a creature in the cave food web.**

**–Place students in 1 whole group, or 2 separate groups depending on how many animal pictures you have available. Allow each student to choose a picture of an animal randomly.**

**–Have students form a large circle.**

**–Give the student at the top of the food chain the yarn. Have them hold on to the end, and toss the yarn to the person in the circle with the animal card that they can consume, or be eaten by. Continue this until each student is holding a piece of the yarn. (BE SURE EACH CHILD HOLDS ONTO THEIR PIECE OF YARN.**

**–Once each child is holding onto the yarn, Have students carefully place the yarn web onto the floor.**

**CLOSING**

**Allow the students to discuss what they observe about the yarn. Tell the students that the food chain can also be called a food web. Be sure that they can see the web-like shape of yarn. Explain that each creature in the cave relies on another creature to live. Have students hypothesize what might happen if one creature of the food chain is eliminated. Also explain that surface animals such as frogs, catfish, etc. cannot survive for extended periods of time in the cave. When one of the surface animals dies in the cave, they are fed on by the blind crayfish. This sustains the crayfish' life. Finish by telling the students that blindfish are endangered species, and that Bluespring has one of the larger populations of these animals.**