

Ant Lions & Ants: Predators & Prey

Big World of Insects, Spiders & Bugs Series

Subject Areas: Science, Life Science, Biology

Synopsis: In this program, we see the classic struggle between predator and prey. The larva of the ant lion fly, sometimes called a doodlebug, is uniquely adapted to its environment. It also possesses physical adaptations that make it a deadly predator to ants. Students will also see how a colony of ants can work together to build a nest and find food.

Learning Objectives:

- Objective 1)** Students will be able to describe the physical characteristics of the ant lion larva that enable it to be a fierce predator.
- Objective 2)** Students will be able to describe how the ant lion captures its prey.
- Objective 3)** Students will be able to discuss the various tasks that worker ants perform.

Vocabulary: Define and discuss the following key terms:

Ant lion, doodlebug, larva, pincers, inquisitive, lair, quarries, terminated, lunar landscape, terrain, prey, predator

Pre-Viewing Questions and Discussion:

- 1) What do you know about ants? Have you ever observed an anthill? What did you see?
- 2) What do ants eat? What animals eat ants?

Post-Viewing Questions and Discussion:

- 1) Describe the ant lion. What does it look like? Where does it live? What does it do to catch prey?
- 2) What is a suitable spot for an ant lion to live?
- 3) Describe the ant lion's hole. Why is this hole so dangerous to ants?
- 4) What are pincers? What do the ant lion's pincers look like? How does the ant lion use its pincers?
- 5) If an ant tries to climb out of the ant lion's hole, what does the ant lion do to try and stop it from getting away? Do you think this method is effective? Why do you think the spider was able to get away?
- 6) Describe the wood ants' nest.
- 7) List and describe the various tasks of the worker ants.

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- 8) How far might an ant travel from the nest when foraging for food? What do ants eat for food? List some of the examples shown in the program.

Additional Activities:

- 1) The narrator says that an ant can carry 60 times its own weight. How much weight could you carry if you were as strong as an ant?
- 2) Draw a picture of an ant and label the head, thorax, abdomen, six legs, and antenna.
- 3) Pretend that you are either an ant lion or an ant. Write a story that describes your typical day. Include descriptions of the various tasks that you have to do. Also discuss how you feel about either living alone or as part of a colony.
- 4) The ant lion is a larva and has not fully developed. What does the ant lion larva develop in to? Research this insect and report on your findings to the class.
- 5) Research how ants communicate. Prepare a report that includes a variety of ant species.
- 6) Formic acid is the poison that ants use when biting their prey. What is formic acid? Why is it so effective?
- 7) Draw a food web that includes the ant lion and ants. Include other animals that might be predators or prey for both ant lions and ants.

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