



**Title:**

Beneath the Leaves

**Target Age:**

Elementary

**Presenter:**

Chris Dinges – IU Biology Outreach

**Biosketch:**

Chris “Dinges” Dinges is a honey bee psychologist turned biology outreach specialist. With his trusty army of arthropods, Dinges seeks to teach S.T.E.A.M. to anyone that will listen. His primary focus is fostering empathy for life through direct interaction and experience. Dinges is currently part of IU Biology Outreach and partners with the Wonderlab in Bloomington, Indiana.

**Activity description:**

In the forests around our homes, a secret world hides just out of view. We will meet the critters of this world, discuss how they survive, and talk about the role they play in the forest habitat. We will design a pit-fall trap to catch some of these critters for gentle observation before releasing them back to their homes.

**Pitfall Trap:**

Materials.

- Large jar. Like a pickle or peanut butter jar.

- Bait. Slice of apple, squash, orange, or other tasty fruit or veggy with high sugar content. Fish flakes might also work.

#### Tools.

- Garden trowel or shovel.

#### Instructions.

- Dig a hole to fit your jar in. Your location can be in your grass, under a tree, by a bush, or any habitat in your yard or neighborhood can work! Make sure it fits all the way in and the lip of the jar is level with the ground. Fill in around the jar to make sure there is a clear path into the pit-fall.
- Place food at the bottom of the jar at dusk. Make sure the food cannot be used as an escape ramp for the critters.
- Check early morning to see who fell in your trap overnight.
- Observe and release any captives in the morning. Do not leave them in the sun all day.
- Remove or seal (with the jar lid) the trap during the day. Alternatively, a spot with full shade throughout the day would be ok. Just do not forget to release your captives!

#### Warning.

- Be sure to wear close toed shoes when working with shovels or other sharp tools. Some animals have defenses, either through bites or other chemical excretions; it is best to observe them from a distance. Set the pit-fall trap at night and check it in the early morning. Do not leave animals trapped in it throughout the day.