

Saw Entanglement Activity

Learning objective

To demonstrate how easily sawfish become entangled in fishing nets.

Background

Fishing activities have led to large declines in sawfish globally. Because of their toothy saw, sawfish are prone to entanglement in fishing nets, recreational fishing lines, and even discarded fishing gear (a type of marine debris). In this activity, students wear a sawfish saw on their fingers and try to capture food, but there is fishing net in between the sawfish and its prey. Students must get in and out of the net to capture prey without getting caught in the net.

Materials

Container for the 'ocean' (we use a basket, but a box will also work)

String

Popsicle sticks

Toothpicks (2 per saw)

Small toy fish or crabs

Glue

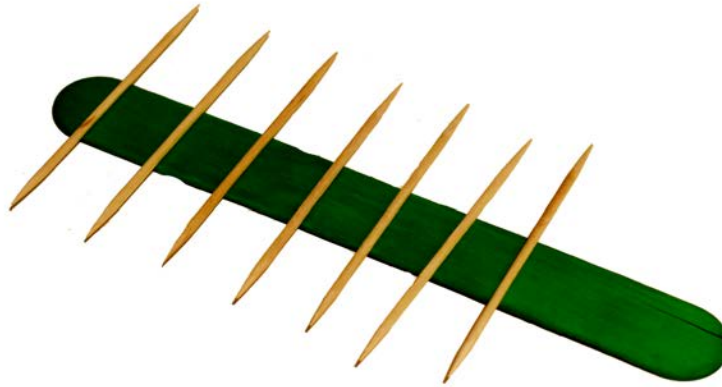
Scissors

Rubber bands (2 per saw)

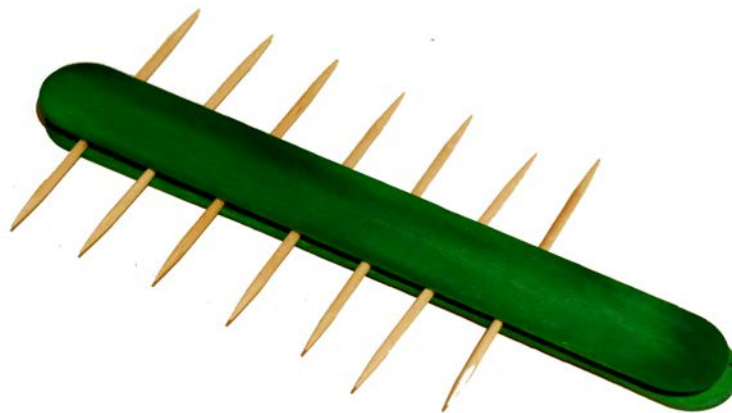


Instructions

1. To make the sawfish saw, you will need two popsicle sticks, toothpicks, and glue. If desired, you can cut the two popsicle sticks to shorten the “saw”. The ideal length will be a little bit longer than the students’ fingers. If you will have different age groups, you can make a couple saws of different lengths.
2. Lay at least 5 toothpicks across one of the popsicles sticks, leaving a space in between each toothpick. The closer the toothpicks are, the more difficult it will be to capture prey without getting entangled, better illustrating the point. Once you have the toothpicks spaced to your liking, glue them down using quick-drying glue. Wait a couple of minutes for this to dry.



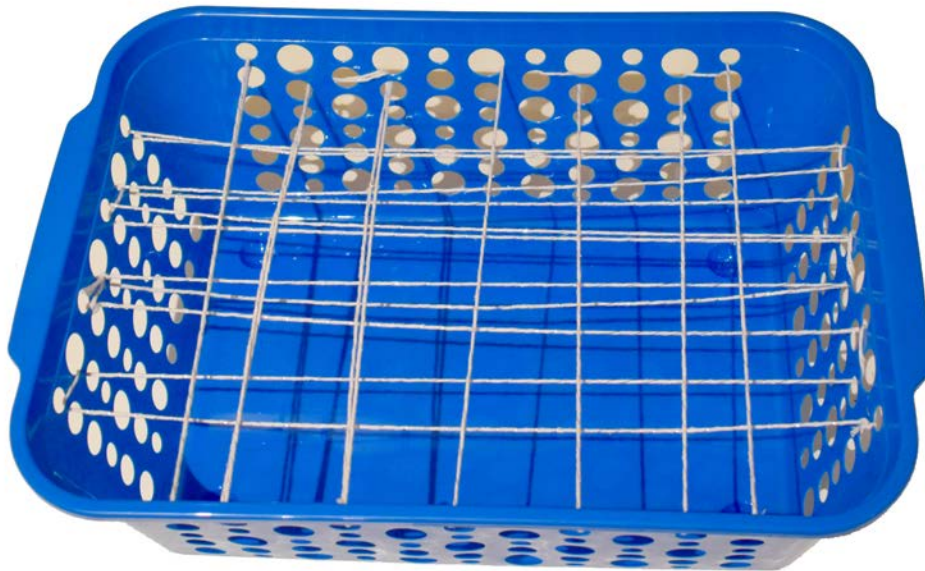
3. Add a couple of small dots of glue to the center of each toothpick and then place the second popsicle stick on top of the toothpicks. The toothpicks should be “sandwiched” between the popsicle sticks with the ends sticking out on either side, resembling a sawfish saw. Set the saw aside to finish drying.



4. To make the “ocean ” container, cut string to appropriate lengths to be strung across the length of the container. Depending on the type of container, you can glue them down or put small holes into the container and weave the string in and out. We like these baskets from the dollar store because we were able to cut one large piece of string and weave it back and forth using the pre-made holes.



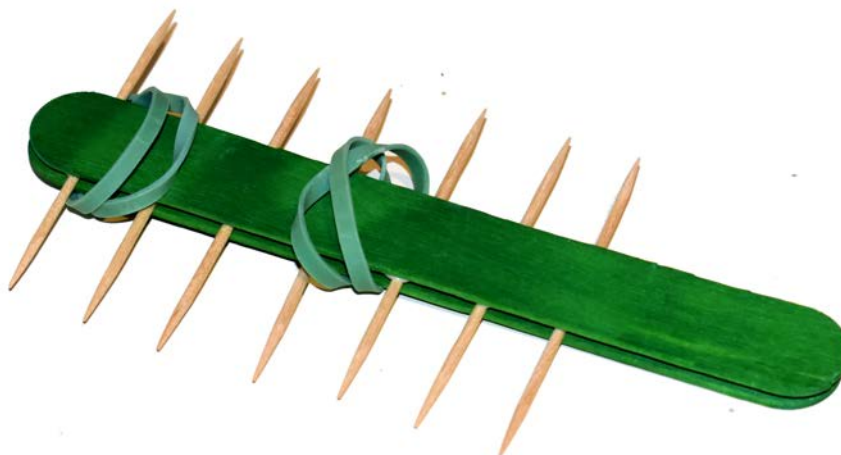
5. Cut another piece of string to the appropriate length and string it across the width of the container. The spacing of this string is important; if the space between each line is too large, it will be too easy to capture prey!



6. Once you have finished stringing the “net”, place a couple toy plastic fish or crab in the container.



7. When the saw is completely dry, strap 2 rubber bands around it. You may have to double each rubber band up.



8. To play the game, place 2 fingers into the rubber band 'straps' to wear the saw and then attempt to remove a toy fish from the container without getting caught in the net, it is more difficult than it seems!

