



Jelly Babies! - Building Jello-mold Eggs found in Vernal Pools
#Head, #Hands, #Heart, #Natural History

Activity Snapshot:

- Vernal Pools are beautiful springtime habitats for many amphibians, a safe(ish) place to raise their young aquatic babies before they undergo metamorphosis and transform into land-walking, air-breathing adults!
- The eggs laid by amphibians are soft, round, and jelly-like, and can be found in different shapes and sizes and forms in and out of the water.

Goal: To use household materials (all edible!) to build your own jello-mold eggs!

Time Recommended:

20-30 minutes

Materials:

There are a number of different ways you could attempt this, so many of these materials will be optional. Feel free to get creative and use something different!

- Something round for the center of the egg
 - Blueberries
 - Cranberries/craisins
 - Grapes/raisins
 - Round candies
 - etc.
- The Jelly-like outer covering of each egg
 - Gelatin (can be any kind of Jello or gelatin product you like)
 - Apple Jelly/jam (or any jelly that is a lighter color)

- Water or juice (that you freeze into ice)
- etc.
- A container for combining/creating your eggs!
 - An ice-cube tray
 - A cup-cake tin,
 - Small round cups/bowls,
 - etc)
- Optional Decorations
 - String, for connecting into egg clusters
 - Toothpicks, for connecting into egg clusters
 - Bowl or Jar for storage/displaying your creation
 - Food coloring
 - Garnishes
 - etc.
- Time and imagination!

Instructions:

1. To make the basic Jelly Babies, first acquire Jello or a gelatin product.
2. Follow the instructions on the Jello or Gelatin, mixing it with water and boiling it.
3. Take an ice cube tray and place one round berry in each space in the tray.
4. Pour the Jello mixture into the tray to cool and set. CAUTION! The Jello or gelatin will be hot!
5. Allow to sit and fix. During this time, or before pouring, you could choose to add toothpicks to the berries, or use a toothpick and string to thread through each berry, to make a string of berries.
6. Once the Jello or gelatin is set, remove from the tray and display!
7. Optionally, you could choose to freeze your Jelly Babies in the freezer for several hours, and then when done, pull them out and place them all together in a bowl or pitcher of water. This is how you would find a lot of amphibian eggs in vernal pools! Clustered together jelly masses with a darker core, where the baby amphibian is developing.

8. Take a picture of your creation! Or draw it out if you prefer.
 - a. Here's a few pictures of the real thing to compare it to!



9. Compared to different kinds of frog and salamander eggs - which does yours look most like?
 - a. Most egg clusters are just that - a big loose cluster of eggs held together by the slimy membranes around them

- b. Some are laid in a line or string along the base of plants - you could try this by stringing your berries together, then adding jello and freezing around them to make a string of Jelly Babies!
10. Finally - give it a taste test, if you'd like!
- a. Amphibians lay so many eggs, because many of them may be eaten by predators!
 - b. Amphibians often choose vernal pools because they are much safer than bodies of water with hungry fish inside!