



Evolution
in Action

Find the hidden UV-patterns
that flowers use to signal
and attract pollinators!

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Many insects and birds see ultraviolet colour that is not visible for humans. With this simple demonstration, participants can observe and see patterns that are normally invisible for humans.

Students can first collect different type of flowers from outside. Next, students can bring them into the classroom and observe them in normal light and draw or take photos of them. After this, the classroom can be darkened, and students can observe with UV-flashlights how the flowers appear under UV-light. Do some parts of the flower appear darker than in a normal light? Do the pollen or stamens appear brighter? For example, sometimes a flower can appear uniformly coloured under human visible light but under UV-light it may show more variation, for example the centre of the flower may appear darker. Again students can draw or take photos of the flowers as they appear in UV-light.

This demonstration can also be used as an inspiration for the sensory ecology art workshop.

Finally, UV reflecting patterns are also common as sexual signals (e.g. as ornaments of male quality) and in different types of protective colour patterns in animals. Therefore, you can use UV-flashlights to observe, for example, how the wings of different butterfly species appear under UV-light.