

Investigations at the Zoo for 3rd-4th Grade

Focus: Animal Characteristics and Food Chains

Dear Chaperone,

Please guide your students through the following observations. As you ask them the following questions allow them to think about their answers and encourage them to come up with questions of their own. The purpose of this activity is not for them to get all the “right” answers but rather to allow them to practice questioning and observation skills.

Feel free to check off each observation task as you complete them during your Zoo tour. The Thinking About Food Chains questions can be discussed during lunch or snack time or on your way back to school on the bus. Enjoy learning with your students!

Explore the Zoo and Find:

- ❑ **An animal to observe.**
 - Where is the animal in its habitat? Why do you think it chose this spot to be in?
 - What is the animal doing? How would this behavior help this animal to survive?
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- ❑ **Two mammals – One that is a predator and one that is a prey animal.**
 - What characteristics do these animals both have that make them mammals?
 - What are some differences that you notice?
- ❑ **One bird.**
 - How are birds similar to mammals? How are they different?
- ❑ **One fish.**
 - Do you think fish are more like birds, mammals, reptiles or amphibians?
- ❑ **One reptile.**
 - How do you know this animal is a reptile?
 - How are reptiles different from birds? How are they similar?
- ❑ **An animal that you think might eat only plants (an herbivore).**
 - Do you think this animal gets most of its food from the ground or from trees?
- ❑ **An animal that you think might eat only other animals (a carnivore).**
 - How do you think this animal finds and captures its prey?
- ❑ **Thinking About Food Chains:**
 - All animals are consumers. This means that they need to eat to get enough energy to survive. How do plants get their energy?
 - If there were no plants in the world, would we still have animals?



After your Zoo visit:

1. Have students generate a list of the animals that they saw at the Zoo. Ask students to create a chart with the headings **herbivore**, **carnivore**, **omnivore**, **predator** and **prey** (provide definitions if necessary). Ask students to sort their zoo animal list into those categories. They should follow up with research to make sure their chart is accurate.