



MARYLAND ZOO

ZooTrek : Adaptations

Grades 3–5



SELF-GUIDED *ZOO TREK*: ADAPTATIONS, Gr. 3–5

HOW TO USE THE *ZOO TREK*

Use the animals and exhibits highlighted in this *Zoo Trek* to help guide you on your visit through The Maryland Zoo.

1. Find the highlighted species on the Zoo Map to help you plan your route. You do not need to follow the *Zoo Trek* in a particular order.
2. At the exhibit for each featured species, read through the *Zoo Trek* information. Take turns reading the questions aloud, and talk about your answers with your classmates.
Remember, there may not always be one “right” answer!
3. Many of the animals are well camouflaged! **The Viewing Tips** can help you find them in the exhibits.
4. Use the **Explore Some More** hints to learn about other amazing animals!

Keep in mind that every day is different at the Zoo. Some animals may be off exhibit during your visit.

Chaperones, please keep your group together and supervise the students at all times.

START YOUR TREK!

BALD EAGLE

These birds are big, strong predators—and they'll eat whatever they can get! Fish are their favorite food. Eagles swoop down to snatch them out of the water with their sharp claws called talons. But other foods are on the menu as well: smaller birds, crustaceans, amphibians, reptiles, and small mammals.

Observe

Eagles are *raptors*. All raptors share three characteristics:

- 1) grasping feet with talons
- 2) a sharp, hooked beak
- 3) eyes that face forward, almost like a human's



Look closely to observe these adaptations in the Zoo's eagle, Vega.

Think About It

Compare Vega to her neighbors at *Polar Bear Watch*: the ravens.

Are the ravens raptors? Why or why not?

Viewing Tip

Vega prefers a high perch. Look high up in her enclosure to find her.



Explore Some More

Be sure to visit the African Aviary and Marsh Aviary to see a wide variety of birds. Look for the three characteristics above to decide if any of these other birds are raptors.



RIVER OTTER

River otters are great swimmers. Their feet are webbed to help them move through the water easily. *What other animals can you think of that have webbed feet?*

Observe

What's that smell?!
Otters rub a scent from their bodies onto parts of their habitat to mark their territories.

Think About It

Can you think of another animal that uses scent to mark its territory?

Hint: You or a friend might have one at home!

SPUR-THIGH TORTOISE

The tortoise's shell helps protect it. The animal can pull its head and limbs into its shell if it feels threatened.

Observe

Spur-thigh tortoises are from a hot climate. They dig burrows like those in the exhibit to help them stay cool. In cool weather they can help the tortoise stay warm.

Think About It

Do you think the tortoises would be well adapted to live in water? Why or why not?

Viewing Tip

The otter often naps in the hammock on the left wall.



Explore Some More

Otters are aquatic mammals. Can you find a flying mammal here at the Zoo?



Hint: Check inside The Cave!



Viewing Tip

The tortoises sometimes hang out in the burrows or on the small hill on the left side of the enclosure.



Explore Some More

"Tortoises" are turtles that are adapted to live on land. Check out the Chimp Forest to find water turtles. *How are tortoises and water turtles different?*



ADDRA GAZELLE

Gazelles are a type of animal called an antelope. They are an important prey species for many predators on the savanna.

Observe

Are the gazelle's eyes on the front of its head or on the sides?

Think About It

If you needed to be able to see all around you to watch for predators, would it be better to have eyes in the front of your head or on the sides?

PORCUPINE

The porcupine's sharp quills help protect it from hungry predators.

Observe

A porcupine's quills are stiff and sharp, but they are actually made of the same material as your hair.

Think About It

When it feels afraid, a porcupine may lift up its quills and turn its back. *Why do you think it moves that way?*

Scan the QR code for a short video to see a porcupine defend itself.



Viewing Tip

The gazelles share a yard with kudu. The gazelles are the ones that are brown and white.



Explore Some More

Antlers or horns?
Antlers fall off and grow back. Deer have antlers. But horns are part of an animal's skull. *What is another animal at the Zoo that has horns?*



Viewing Tip

Porcupines are nocturnal, which means they are most active at night. Much of the time they can be found sleeping in their burrow.



Explore Some More

The opposite of *nocturnal* is *diurnal*.



Can you find an animal along the Boardwalk that is diurnal?
When is a diurnal animal most active?

AFRICAN ELEPHANT

Can you eat with your nose? An elephant can! The elephant can use its trunk to eat, drink, breathe, and smell. An elephant can even use its trunk to lift or push heavy objects.

Observe

Watch one of the elephants eat, or scan the QR code to get a close look at an elephant eating.



Think About It

How is the tip of an elephant's trunk like a hand?

Viewing Tip

The lower level viewing area gets you closer to the elephants, but the overlook generally gives a better view.



Explore Some More

Female elephants live in groups called herds.



Find other animals at the Zoo that live in a herd.



PANAMANIAN GOLDEN FROG

A Panamanian golden frog has poison on its skin that help protect it from predators.

Observe

Does the frog's colors help it blend in or stand out?

Think About It

How do you think standing out can actually help a Panamanian golden frog survive in its environment?

Viewing Tip

Sometimes the frogs hang out in clumps near the back of the exhibit.



Explore Some More

Golden frogs live near streams and waterfalls. Look for another animal inside the Chimp Forest that has a waterfall in its exhibit.



OKAPI

Believe it or not, okapis actually are not part zebra! An okapi's color pattern is an adaptation for its natural habitat.

What kind of habitat do you think it would blend in with best: a forest or a grassland?



Observe

In okapis, only the males have horns.

Are the Zoo's okapis male or female?

Think About It

An okapi's tongue is about a foot long!

How do you think the long tongue helps the okapi survive?

Watch the okapi closely, or scan the QR code to find out!



Viewing Tip

If you don't see the okapi outside, look inside the Giraffe House.



Explore Some More

Check out the other residents of the Giraffe House. Giraffes are the okapi's closest relative. They look different because they are adapted for different habitats.



THANK YOU FOR VISITING THE MARYLAND ZOO IN BALTIMORE!

What was your favorite animal today?