

MARYLAND ZOO

ZooTrek : Habitats

Grades 6–8



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!

POLAR BEAR

Observe

This exhibit represents the tundra ecosystem, the southernmost part of polar bear range.

In the winter, the tundra is cold and snowy, but in the summer, the tundra actually has grasses and wildflowers.



Viewing Tip

Go in the Tundra Buggy for a great view over the two yards.



Explore Some More

In the wild, a polar bear would never meet a penguin. Polar bears live high above the equator. Visit Penguin Coast today any find out where you would find all the world's penguins.



Think About It

Polar bears leave the tundra and go out on sea ice to hunt. They sit and wait on the ice for their prey—seals—to come up for air. As the Arctic climate becomes warmer, ice melts earlier in the spring and re-freezes later in the winter.

How could this be a problem for the bears?



PENGUIN COAST

Penguins in Africa?? Definitely! These are warm-weather penguins. They are native to a climate that is roughly similar to what we have here in Baltimore.

Observe

Penguins are well adapted to be efficient ocean hunters. But they do need to nest on land where eggs and chicks can stay warm and dry.

Think About It

In their ocean food web, penguins are both predators and prey. Human fishers have started to compete for the same fish that the penguins need to survive.

How will this competition affect this ocean food web?

LEOPARD'S LAIR

A habitat is where an animal lives, and a niche is the role it plays. Leopard and cheetah habitats overlap. But different adaptations give each species a slightly different niche.

Observe

Check out the large tree in the exhibit. Leopards are great climbers! They can hang their food up on tree branches to keep it away from other animals.

Think About It

Leopards are *nocturnal*. Cheetahs are *diurnal* (they hunt during the day).

How does this behavior help reduce competition between cheetahs and leopards?

Viewing Tip

Go inside the Penguin Education Center for the underwater viewing window.



Explore Some More

Be sure to check out the cormorants, the dark brown birds that share Penguin Coast.



Viewing Tip

Like most cats, leopards like to sleep a lot! Some of our leopard's favorite places to rest are in the far left corner of the exhibit, behind the tree, or on top of the rocks.



Explore Some More

Compare the leopard and cheetah enclosures. Why do you think the leopard enclosure has a roof but the cheetah yard does not?



AFRICAN WATERING HOLE

During the dry season on the African savanna, a watering hole is a lifeline for a huge variety of species.



Observe

What are three things the animals in this exhibit might compete for?

Think About It

Do you think the species in this exhibit are herbivores or carnivores?

Are they primary consumers or secondary consumers?



Viewing Tip

The zebras can be very shy, so sometimes they run back inside. If you don't see them the first time, check again on your way back.



Explore Some More

Be sure to visit the elephants, one of the most important "engineers" of the savanna ecosystem. By pushing down trees, elephants help savanna grasses get enough sunlight to thrive.



WARTHOG BURROW

How is a warthog like a plow?

As warthogs dig for the plants and roots they like to eat, they turn the soil. Turning the top layer of soil mixes in nutrients from decaying plants.

Observe

Mud is an important part of a warthog's habitat. Wallowing in mud helps the warthog protect its skin from bugs and the sun.

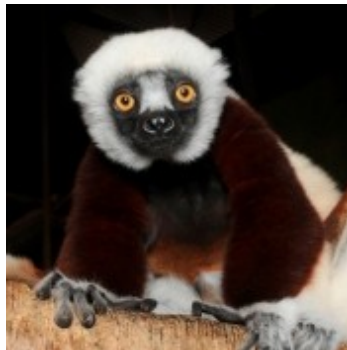
Think About It

When it feels threatened, a warthog will back itself into a burrow like the ones you see here in the yard.

Why do you think the warthog backs into a burrow instead of walking in forward?

LEMUR LANE

Like all lemurs, sifakas (pronounced she-FAHK) are found in the wild only on the island of Madagascar.



Observe

These lemurs have powerful hind legs that can allow them to leap more than 20 feet from one tree to another.

Watch the lemurs move through their exhibit or snap the QR code to see leaping lemurs.

Think About It

Sifakas spend about 30–40% of their day foraging throughout their territory for the leaves they eat.

How many total hours in a day does that represent?

Viewing Tip

The warthog often has access to go back inside. If you missed her, be sure to check the yard again on your way back.



Explore Some More

Visit the Zoo's Farmyard to meet a warthog relative.



Viewing Tip

During cooler months, the sifakas are inside Chimp Forest. In late spring and summer, they are outside on Lemur Lane along with two other lemur species.



Explore Some More

Check out some relatives of lemurs in Chimp Forest: chimpanzees and colobus monkeys.



HELLBENDER STREAM

Amphibians need to spend at least part of their lives in water. These amphibians spend almost all their time underwater.

Observe

There are two hellbenders in the exhibit.
Can you find both of them?

Think About It

Hellbenders live in streams with flowing water. Because they absorb oxygen through their skin, hellbenders need moving water to bring them a fresh oxygen supply.

As humans dam streams or dump silt into them, what effect do you think that has on the flow of water? What effect will that ultimately have on hellbenders?

BOX TURTLE MEADOW

These animals are called **box** turtles because when one feels threatened, it can close the bottom part of its shell like the lid of a box to keep predators out.

Observe

Box turtles are adapted for many different habitats, from a meadow like this one to wooded area with lots of leaves.

What is the relationship between the turtle coloration and their habitat?

Think About It

Box turtle habitat in Maryland has been divided up by roads and other human development.

What effects do you think these changes to the habitat have on the turtles?

Viewing Tip

The hellbenders are well camouflaged against the rocky surfaces of their habitat. Look for wrinkled “rocks”—those wrinkles are the sides of the hellbender’s body!



Explore Some More

How many different types of amphibians can you find on exhibit in the *Maryland Wilderness*?



Viewing Tip

Scan the whole yard carefully, looking for flecks of yellow on the turtles’ shells.

Note: In winter the box turtles are off exhibit.



Explore Some More

Tortoise or turtle?
They are actually all turtles! But “tortoises” are turtles adapted for land. (Maybe box turtles should be called “Box tortoises”!) Visit the spur-thigh tortoises along the Boardwalk in *African Journey*.

