

zoo trek

ZOO POO

In nature, nothing goes to waste...even poo!

For many types of animals, poo can be a building material or even a way to communicate.

This Zoo Trek features five species that use poo in amazing ways.

Be sure you have a printout of the Zoo Map--or check out the interactive map on the Zoo website--and let's get started!

MARYLAND
ZOO

african penguin

For African penguins, poo makes an excellent nesting material.



Human parents want to throw away a dirty diaper as quickly as possible! But an African penguin parent wants to keep the poo close to home. In fact, lining the nest with their poo, called guano, helps the nest stay dry. It also insulates the nest, keeping it from getting too hot on a sunny beach.

white rhino

White rhinos pile poo on a shared midden.

Visiting the poo pile, or midden, is not just a place for a rhino to do its business. It's a place to sniff around for information on what other rhinos are in the area.

See if you can spot the rhino midden at the African Watering Hole!



african elephant

An African elephant can produce 100 pounds of poo or more each day.



Elephants poo a lot-- because they eat a lot!

Elephants help grow their favorite foods by spreading the seeds in their poo, also called dung. As elephants travel, the poo they drop along the way plants seeds that will later grow into food they can eat.

okapi

When okapis are first born, they do not poo for up to two months!

Okapis live in a rainforest, where they move quietly to hide from predators like leopards. But leopards have a very good sense of smell. To help stay hidden, baby okapis can go without pooping. With no poop to smell, the leopard has a harder time finding the okapi calf.



river otter

North American river otters like a stinky latrine.



North American river otters mostly like to live alone--but they do like to know who is close by. Otters will use a shared bathroom area called a latrine. And it is very smelly! But those smells carry a lot of information about who is who among the local otters. You can think of an otter latrine as otter social media.