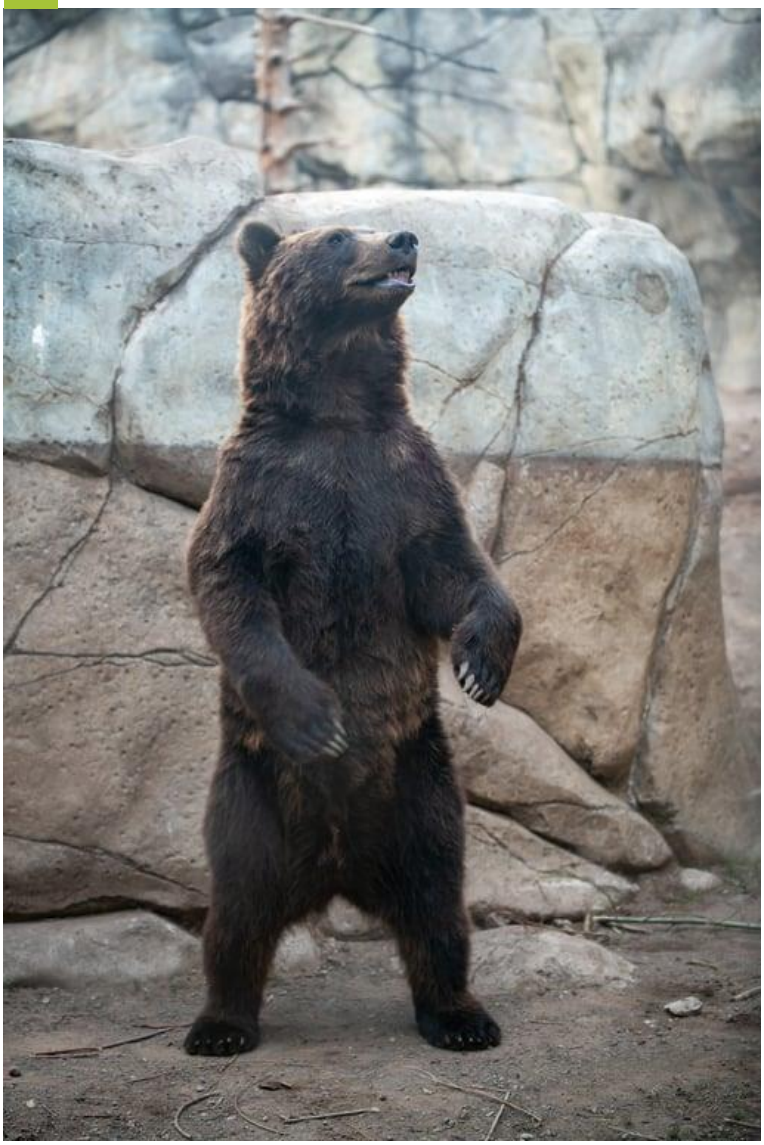
Self-Guided Zoo Tour

2023



Introduction

This guide will help enhance your students' learning during your trip to the zoo. We suggest you print it to bring during your visit or pull it up on your phone while you're at the zoo.

To schedule a staff-guided tour or other educational program, please see our website: www.LSZooDuluth.org.

Thank you for visiting and enjoy your self-guided tour!

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Visit Tips

• When you first enter a building or approach an animal habitat, students are often so excited that they aren't ready to learn or listen. Let them look at the habitat first and talk with their peers. Then, gather them together to share information and ask questions.

• Take notes about what the students are noticing and saying about the animals. You can re-visit these comments later by incorporating them into their lessons; that way, they are learning what they are most interested in. If you don't know the answers to their questions, write them down and find the answers together later.

• Read the signs! Each habitat has an animal sign posted near it and contains fun facts and natural history about that animal.

Zoo Map

Griggs Learning Center

Griggs Learning Center is home to a variety of animals. Scientists sort animals into groups to easily compare them to one another. Often, scientists first sort animals into vertebrates (animals that have backbones) and invertebrates (animals that do not have backbones). In this room, an example of an animal that does not have a backbone is a cockroach. Instead, they have a hard outer shell called an exoskeleton.

Of the animals in this room that do have backbones, scientists group them into the amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal groups.

Learning Opportunity:

K-2nd: Search the room and see if you can find an animal with fur, an animal with scales, and an animal with feathers.

3rd-5th: Count how many birds, how many mammals, and how many reptiles you find in the room.

Tiger & Path to Primate Building

Along this path, you will see a variety of animals. Our animal caretakers have the important job of providing for the animals' needs. They ensure the animals get enough food and water, have a safe place to live, and have enough space to be comfortable.

Look at the tiger habitat. Animal care staff provide a pool of water because tigers like to swim. They also give the tiger enrichment. Enrichment can be a toy, music or sounds, new food items, or new smells (like wool from our barn animals). Enrichment gives the animal something new to explore every day and provides them with an opportunity to use their senses and adaptations like they would in their natural habitat.

Learning Opportunity:

K-2nd: As you walk, see if you can find an animal's food, water, and shelter. If you don't see food, it could be hidden, or the animal has already eaten it. Can you see any enrichment items?

3rd-5th: Can you tell by looking at each animal's habitat what natural habitat they would live in? Take a guess and then check your answers by reading the signs.

Primate Building

Welcome to the Primate Building! Primates are animals that include lemurs, apes, and monkeys. Most primates are found in tropical areas of the world, including Central and South America, Africa, and Asia.

The Lake Superior Zoo works with other zoos to help breed and raise primate babies because many of the world's primates are endangered and not as many are found in the wild as before. We have had many successful births at the zoo, including ring-tailed lemurs, cotton-top tamarins, black-crested mangabeys (found in Zoo Central), and Angolan colobus monkeys.

While you explore, notice the differences and similarities among the primates in the building.

Learning Opportunity:

K-2nd: Look at the different primates in this building. Find two different primates: What do you see that is the same between these two primates? What do you notice that is different?

3rd-5th: Look at the sign on each animal habitat. What continent or continents are each species of primate from?

Nocturnal Trail

Welcome to the Nocturnal Trail! Animals that are most active at night are called nocturnal. In this section, you will notice that most of the animal habitat lights are off to make it appear as if it is nighttime. This way, the nocturnal animals are awake and active while visitors are here. At about 9:00 every night, the lights will turn on so the animals will know it's time to rest.

Nocturnal animals have adaptations to help them find food, communicate, and avoid predators in the dark. Adaptations are something on their body or a way they behave that helps them survive. For example, the large nose of the porcupine helps it rely on its sense of smell to find food if it's too dark to use their eyes.

Learning Opportunity:

K-2nd: Explore each animal habitat. Can you find an animal with large eyes to help it see better at night? Can you find an animal with large ears to help it hear better at night? Can you find an animal with fur or feathers that would help it camouflage at night?

3rd-5th: Choose an animal on the nocturnal trail to watch closely and observe. What adaptations does this animal have that would help it survive at night?

Barnyard

Welcome to the Barnyard! Because these animals are found on farms and raised by people—like pet dogs and cats—they are considered domestic. Barn animals like goats, sheep, and pigs help make people's lives better by offering protection, food, and clothing. Check out the barn kiosk sign to find out what different products we get from animals and where the ingredients from a pizza come from.

Learning Opportunity:

K-2nd: Find all the barn animals—point to a goat, sheep, and pig! Do you notice anything the same or different among these animals?

3rd – 5th: Find each animal's sign on the fence. Can you match the animal's sign to the animal in the barnyard? Are you able to locate and identify each kind of goat, sheep, and pig?

Northern Animals

Snow Leopard and Eurasian Lynx

This side of the zoo is home to many of the zoo's predators. Predators are animals that hunt and eat other animals (the hunted animals are called prey). Predators have eyes on the front of their heads that help them see how close or far away their prey is. Snow leopards have long tails that improve their balance when jumping and can be wrapped around their body and face for extra warmth in the winter. They also have large paws that act like snowshoes to help them stay on top of the snow while hunting.

Learning Opportunity:

K-2nd: What senses would these animals use to help them hunt?

3rd–5th: Look at the signs and find out what animals the lynx and snow leopard hunt in the wild. What adaptations do they use to prey on these animals?

Black Bear and Cougars

Bear and cougar cubs will stay with their mothers until they are 1½ to 2 years old. During these years, parents teach their young how to survive and hunt. Unfortunately, the zoo's cougars and bears didn't have the opportunity to learn survival skills from their parents because they were orphaned as cubs. As orphans, they would not have survived on their own in their natural habitat, so they were brought here for our animal care staff to take care of them.

Learning Opportunity:

K-5th: What is something you can do to help animals in nature?

Ideas: If you see an injured or orphaned animal, tell an adult, and don't try to take care of it on your own. Injured and orphaned animals require special care and are often scared and might hurt you. An adult can call a local wildlife rehabilitator who may take the animal in and care for it.

Recycle when you can, pick up litter, save energy by turning off lights when you leave a room, and save water by turning the faucet off while brushing your teeth. All these things help make the environment healthier for animals and people.

Gray Wolves

Gray wolves are the largest wild canid (dog family). Their thick underfur helps keep them warm during extremely cold winters. Gray wolves are highly social animals. They live in groups called "packs" that consist of an adult male and female and their offspring. Wolves communicate using body language, scent-marking, and vocalizations. One of the best-known ways wolves communicate is by howling. Wolves howl for many reasons: to rally the pack before a hunt, to defend territory or food, to keep in touch when separated, or just for the fun of it!

Learning Opportunity:

K-2nd: What sound do you think a wolf would make if it were hurt?
If it were angry?
If it were playing?

3rd-5th: Our wolves can tell each other apart by smell and sound. If it was your job to take care of the wolves, how would you tell them apart?

North American River Otters

River otters are known as playful animals. They can often be seen sliding, wrestling, and doing somersaults. Many of their "play" activities serve a purpose. Some are used to strengthen friendships, to practice hunting techniques, and to scent mark. They are excellent swimmers and divers and can stay underwater for up to four minutes. River otters do not mind the cold because their outer coat of coarse guard hairs and thick undercoat help waterproof them and keep them from getting too cold. They don't even have blubber; their fur keeps them plenty warm.

Learning Opportunity:

K-2nd: How do you stay warm in the winter?
How is that the same as an otter?
How is it different?

3rd-5th: Watch as the otters swim; what do you notice about their fur? What adaptations do they have that make them good swimmers?

Brown Bears

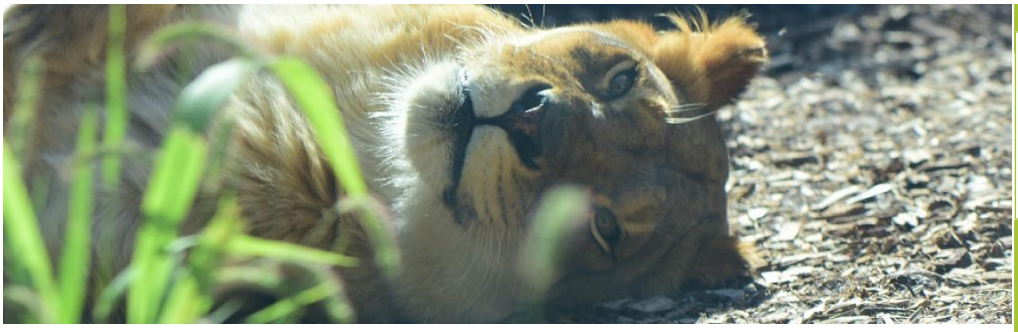
Most brown bears hibernate during the winter and need to consume large amounts of food during the summer and fall to build up their fat stores. Brown bears are usually diurnal (active during the day) but can become nocturnal (active at night) if competition for food or space forces them to. Even though they are very large animals, brown bears are capable of extremely rapid movement. They can run up to 30 mph in short bursts.

Our two brown bears are named Tundra and Banks. Their mother died when they were young cubs, and they came to the zoo shortly after. Because they've been around people their whole lives, they are curious and interactive with zoo guests.

Learning Opportunity:

K-2nd: What other animals hibernate in winter?
(Chipmunks, frogs, snakes, some bats)
What animals migrate in the winter?
(Birds, some bats, some insects)

3rd-5th: How are the brown bears like the black bear? How are they different?
(The main difference is that brown bears have large muscles on their back for digging – it looks like a hump. Black bears can be born brown, so color isn't always a difference. The zoo's black bear has brown fur!)



African Lion

Many animals, like our lioness, were born in human care at a zoo instead of being born in their natural habitat. She has been around people her entire life and she helps people learn about her wild relatives. Even though our lioness grew up around people, she is still dangerous. Her caretakers never touch her or go in the same area without a barrier or fence. When they need to feed her or clean her habitat, she is trained to go inside the building. Her caretakers open the door to the building, call her name, and she walks right in! Once the lion is inside, her caretakers can safely go out on the habitat to clean and place food. Training also helps staff keep animals healthy by giving them medicine and weighing them on a scale. Many animals like their training sessions because they get treats and attention. Our lioness's favorite training treats are meatballs.

Learning Opportunity:

K-5th: What would be your favorite training treat? If you could train any animal at the zoo, what would you want to train?

Bald Eagles

The bald eagle has been the national emblem of the United States of America since 1782. Adult bald eagles are easy to recognize because of their size, brown bodies, and white heads. An eagle grows its white head and tail feathers after it turns four or five years old. Before that, its feathers are mostly brown. Bald eagles are very strong fliers. They can reach speeds of 35-43 mph while gliding and flapping, 30 mph while carrying fish, and 75-99 mph while diving. Our zoo is home to two eagles named Liberty and Buddy. They were injured in the wild and unable to survive on their own.

Learning Opportunity:

K-2nd: What is special about a bird's mouth? Is it like our mouth?

3rd-5th: Eagles are apex predators, meaning they are at the top of the food chain. What characteristics do eagles have that make them such skilled hunters?

AUSTRALIA BUILDING

Animals from Australia and Oceania are unique because they live on islands, which means they live separately from other animals in the world. Because of this isolation, Australia is home to most of the world's marsupials and many other animals only found in Australia. Marsupials are mammals (animals with fur) with a pouch to keep their babies in when they are first born. The zoo's kangaroos, wallabies, and brush-tailed bettongs are all marsupials. A marsupial's life cycle is like other mammals because they must get milk from their mothers.

Learning Opportunity:

K-2nd: What animals in this building hatch from an egg? What animals give live birth and carry their babies in a pouch?

3rd-5th: What animals in this building would get milk from their mothers? What animals would lay eggs? What do you think these animals have to do to keep their eggs, babies, and young fed and safe from predators?

Top 10 Questions Kids Ask about the Lake Superior Zoo

10. How do zoos help animals?

The Lake Superior Zoo is committed to helping animals in their natural habitats. One way we help is by raising money for conservation programs. See if you can find donation boxes as you walk around the zoo. Another way we help is by breeding endangered animals, like monkeys and lemurs. This way, if their relatives disappear, they won't go extinct. We also take care of the earth and animals by recycling, using renewable energy, buying local products, and avoiding plastic when we can. We organize beach and trail clean-ups to protect our local wildlife, and we teach people how they can help animals.

9. Why doesn't the zoo have more baby animals?

In general, our zoo only breeds animals that are threatened or endangered. Bigger zoos with scientists on staff decide which animals should have babies and which zoo they will live in when they grow up. If our zoo has enough space and time to breed animals, we will be approved to breed certain animals. Currently, our zoo breeds monkeys, lemurs, gorals, kookaburras, mousebirds, prehensile-tailed porcupines, eagle-owls, swift fox, and red-crested turacos.

8. Do animals live longer in the wild or in the zoo's care?

In general, animals living in zoos live much longer because they have proper nutrition, safety from severe injury, and routine veterinary care. For example, a wild tiger might only live to be 8 or 10, whereas a tiger at a zoo can live to be 15 or even 20.

7. Where does the zoo get its animals?

Most of our animals come from other zoos. For example, Taj the tiger was born in Ohio and had three sisters. Once they got old enough, the sisters had to be separated and sent to other zoos because tigers are solitary (prefer to live alone). Many of the zoo's North American animals (bears, cougars, bald eagles) were orphaned or injured in their natural habitat, so the only way they can survive is in our care.

6. Where do the animals go in the winter?

They stay here! Most of our animals live in a cold climate in the wild, so living in Duluth isn't all that different for them. The exceptions are the lion, turkey vulture, kangaroos, and wallabies—they can go inside to their heated bedrooms when it gets below freezing. So, if you visit on a cold winter day, you may not see the lion or kangaroos.

5. Why don't you have giraffes or elephants?

Giraffes and elephants are from Africa and cannot live in cold places like Duluth unless they have a big, warm barn and lots of space to run around. Our zoo is too small to build habitats for big animals that need to stay warm in winter.

Top 10 Questions Kids Ask about the Lake Superior Zoo

4. Do the animals bite?

Yes, they can. Animal care staff are very careful when working with them. For example, when training a big cat, staff will use long forks to give them their treat so their teeth can bite the fork instead of fingers. Some people think that our monkeys seem friendly, but they are very dangerous and could severely injure a person if they tried to pet them.

3. Do the zookeepers go in with the animals or pet them?

Animal care staff always keep fencing between themselves and dangerous animals like big cats, bears, and the larger monkeys. The animals are trained to go into the building connected to their habitat when it's time for staff to clean—this is called "shifting" the animal. Once the animals are shifted and locked inside, staff can safely go into the habitat to clean and put out enrichment.

2. Do the animals get bored?

Every animal expresses itself differently. Animal care staff have years of experience learning how to "read" each animal's behavior so they can make sure they are healthy and comfortable. We do our best to keep our animals content by giving them new enrichment every day—then they can use their senses and instincts to explore and play. After they finish playing, they like to rest. So, if you see an animal that looks sleepy, it's more likely that it's resting and not bored.

1. How do I become a zookeeper?

First, you should see what it's like to work at a zoo. You can do this by signing up for programs such as Zoo Camp or Zoo Crew. If you think you'd like to do it as a career, you'll need to go to college and get a degree in biology or zoology. As a college student, you will need to do an internship at a zoo or volunteer to get more experience working with animals.

We hope you enjoyed your visit to the Lake Superior Zoo!

For more zoo and educational resources, be sure to visit our website: www.LSZooDuluth.org