

INQUIRY GUIDE

Grades 9-12



MAKE YOUR FIELD TRIP A SUCCESS!

Follow this guide as you visit each area of the zoo.

The packet is arranged as follows:

- Zoo Map
- Information on Volunteering

For a successful visit, please respect:

- Our animals. Please do not tap on the glass, call out to the animals, or try to touch an animal outside of the Barn in Alabama Wilds.
- Zoo Grounds. Please help keep the zoo clean by disposing of all trash and recyclables in the bins provided.
- Other guests. Please be mindful about the eye line of other visitors at a viewing area. Are you blocking the way for a visitor who may be shorter than you? If you happen to see, hear, or feel anything you think is dangerous or offensive, please find the nearest zoo staff member.
- Employees and volunteers. Our highly trained professionals do their best to ensure you have a positive experience during your visit. Many of our animal care professionals are happy to chat with you and answer any of your questions, but may not be able to do so until they are finished training with an animal or finishing up the task at hand.

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

The questions below can be applied to ANY animal at the Birmingham Zoo. As you make your way through the zoo's diverse spaces, compare what you have seen using the questions below as a guide.

The Birmingham Zoo strives to replicate the environment animals would find in the wild. The zoo's dedicated team of animal care professionals, also called keepers, work to recreate dozens of natural habitats found throughout the world.

Where does this animal live in the wild? Find animals around the zoo from 20 different countries or regions of the world and mark them below.



ENRICHMENT FIND & DESIGN

Have you ever wondered why there are different items in our animal habitats? Our animal care professionals work to provide a variety of enrichment items to all of our animals. Enrichment is anything that encourages the natural behaviors of our animals. This can include new objects to see, smell, taste, and explore. For example, if an animal searches for its food in the wild, animal care professionals can place items in a puzzle feeder or ball with holes in it to encourage foraging and problem solving.

Hidden mice for scavenging

Rope for climbing

Puzzle feeder for foraging

Soap for smelling and touching

Cardboard for manipulation

Find two different enrichment items anywhere in the zoo. Consider the purpose of this enrichment item for each animal.

Enrichment item 1:

Animal habitat: _____

Type of enrichment: _____

Description of item: _____

Behavior encouraged: _____

Enrichment item 2:

Animal habitat: _____

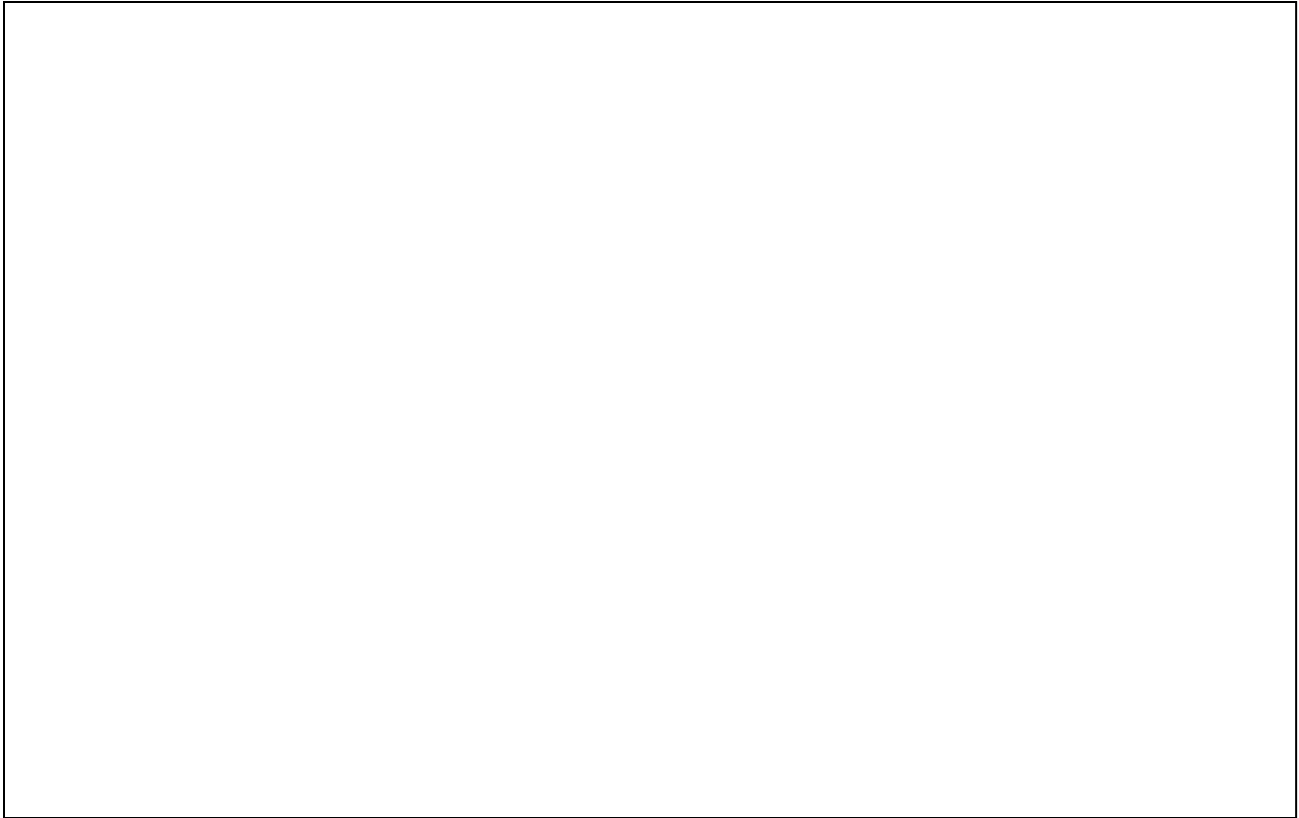
Type of enrichment: _____

Description of item: _____

Behavior encouraged: _____

Now, it's your turn! 

Design your own enrichment item.



Animal habitat: _____ Type of enrichment: _____

Description of item: _____

Behavior encouraged: _____

What materials would you need to make this enrichment?

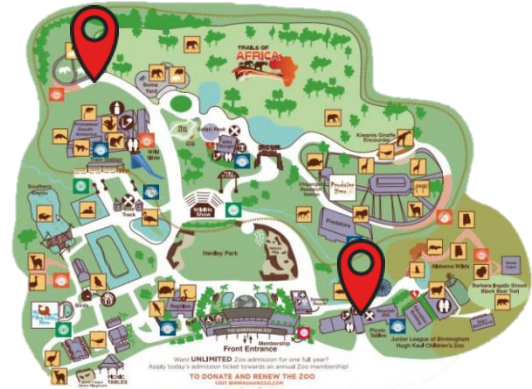
What safety concerns need to be considered when creating this enrichment item?

Could this enrichment be used by any other animals?

GREEN INITIATIVES

Locations: Freshwater Tanks by Splash Pads and Rhinos

At the Birmingham Zoo, we work to practice sustainability, or actions that will reduce the amount of natural resources that we consume from our planet. Below, you will find three structures which allow the zoo to reduce and



Location: outside Front Entrance restrooms

Cistern

How does the water enter the cistern? From which locations does the water come? _____

Where does the water collected in the cistern end up? If not collected, where might the rain water have gone instead? _____



Solar Panels

Location: across from Alabama Stream

How many lightbulbs could the solar panels above power daily? _____

List some of the other agencies who partnered with the zoo on this project. Why might it be important for groups to collaborate on projects like this? _____



Location: behind rhino habitat

Ecodrum™

How might the diet of an animal (herbivore, carnivore, or omnivore) affect the compost produced from the Ecodrum™? _____

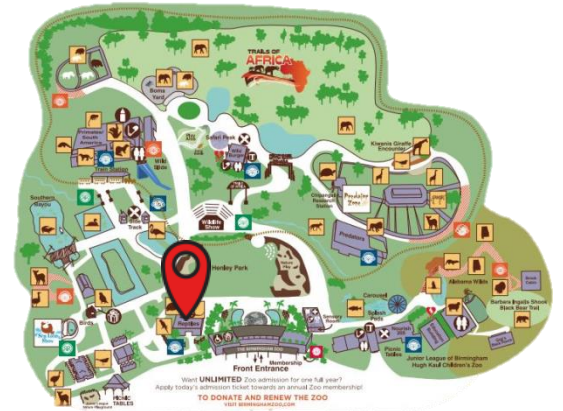
In what ways might the compost be used around the zoo? _____



ANIMAL STEREOTYPES

Location: Reptile House

A stereotype is a specific image or idea associated with members of a group. For example, black cats have been stereotyped as a symbol of bad luck. Fill out the information below to consider and explore animal stereotypes and the impacts they may have on an animal's survival



Chosen Animal: _____

1. List six words that immediately come to mind when you think of this animal:
2. Are the words you wrote above mostly positive or negative? Why do you think you have that opinion?
3. Does the information on the sign and the look of the habitat support those ideas? Why do you think that is?
4. What are some examples from stories or history that portray this animal in a stereotypical way? For example, an owl might always be portrayed as a wise animal.

HABITAT DESIGN

Have you ever thought about the work that goes into designing habitats for animals at the Birmingham Zoo? Habitats are designed specifically with the animal's needs in mind.

Animal care professionals must be able to provide care for the animals and access the exhibit for cleaning, training, enrichment, and monitoring the animals' health. In order for them to do their jobs effectively, the habitat must be designed properly. Observe any zoo habitat to complete the following questions.


Chosen animal: _____

Can you find the keeper's door? Now can you find the animal's door? Where do you think those doors lead? _____

Keepers must be able to clean every surface within a habitat. What tools might a keeper use to clean these surfaces? Are there any surfaces that may be a challenge to clean? How do you think the keepers accomplish this? _____

Is this animal from Alabama? If not, how do you think the habitat is modified for this animal in a climate that the animal isn't adapted to? (Think: temperature, humidity, etc.)

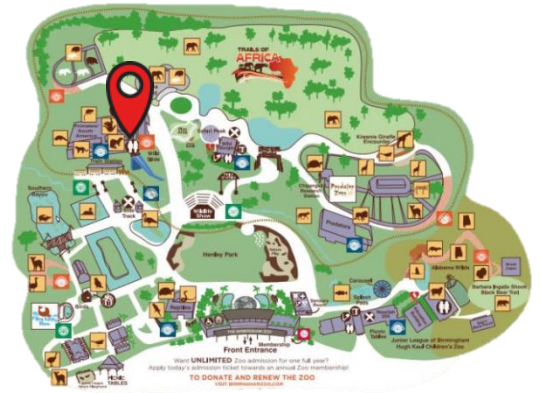
Draw a map of the habitat you observed, including doors for keepers and animals, enrichment items, places to hide for privacy, feeding areas, and room to exercise.



PASSION INTO CONSERVATION ACTION

Location: Jaguar Habitat in the Primate Building

Birmingham Zoo employees are passionate about conserving the natural world. The Passion into Conservation Action grant, or PiCA, allows staff to take part in worldwide conservation projects. The Birmingham Zoo has sent employees from across the zoo to 6 continents and over 15 countries.



Take a look at the PiCA program recipients along the back wall. Which project do you find the most interesting? Why?

Select three projects and list their benefits to conservation. What do you think "conservation" means?

If you had the opportunity to have a PiCA project, what would you do? Fill out the graphic on the following page.

If you had the opportunity to experience research and conserve any animal on a PiCA project, what would your project be?

Using the past projects as a guide, fill out the graphic below:



COME VOLUNTEER WITH US!

Interested in working at a Zoo? You will need to know what you're getting into, as well as show your interest to people who can later write you references or guide you to open positions. Need volunteer hours to graduate? We can help you with that! Come volunteer or intern with us---these are great ways to spend your summer vacation!



To find out more about volunteer opportunities at the Birmingham Zoo, contact:

volunteers@birminghamzoo.com or visit our website at www.birminghamzoo.com/get-involved/volunteer/