FIELD TRIP ACTIVITY GUIDE

FOR EARLY ELEMENTARY: GRADES K-1ST

THEME: CARING ABOUT ANIMALS

The theme for this activity guide focuses on caring for animals, as a way for young learners to build empathy and compassion for wildlife. Henry Vilas Zoo recognizes empathy towards wildlife as an important building block for learning to take conservation action.

STANDARDS

Wisconsin Standards for Science (WSS) / Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS):

- LS1.A: Structure and Function
- LS1.B: Growth and Development of Organisms
- LS1.D: Information Processing

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Through participation in this field trip, students will be able to:

- Experience affective empathy towards animals
- Apply cognitive empathy towards animals
- Practice wildlife observation skills that increase chances of postive animal interaction

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HENRY VILAS ZOO®

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FIELD TRIP POINTERS

Go slow! Do not expect to cover the entire zoo during your field trip. Students will have a more memorable experience by lingering longer at fewer exhibits.

Look for the Docents! The zoo often has Docents stationed at various exhibits who can help expand your discussions and tell stories that help students develop empathy for animals. Check the Zoo's website for more guidelines and recommendations for a successful field trip:
https://www.henryvilaszoo.gov/education/school-field-trip/

HOW TO USE THIS ACTIVITY GUIDE

This field trip guide presents five age-appropriate activities that may be completed in any order. Teachers and chaperones are encouraged to use the guide as a reference throughout the field trip, while allowing student-directed learning to occur. Kindergarten and 1st graders usually have a natural affinity for animals, and are developing the ability to observe and interpret animal behaviors through the lens of their own experiences. The icons on each page symbolize different best practices for developing empathy in children.

FRAMING EMPATHY

INCREASE KNOWLEDGE

ACTIVATING IMAGINATION

MODELING EMPATHY BEHAVIORS

PRACTICING BEHAVIORS

EXPERIENCE ANIMALS CLOSE UP

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ACTIVITY 1

AREA: CHILDREN'S ZOO
ANIMAL: GOATS

GUIDING QUESTION:

How does brushing the goats make you feel? How do you think it feels for them?

INSTRUCTIONS:

Invite students to groom the goats with a brush, following the instructions provided by zoo staff and volunteers. Some children may be hesitant to approach or touch the goats; just observing is ok, too! When children interact with the goats in a caring way, they are accessing empathy. Promote deeper affective connections with animals by letting the goats explore their exhibit space and choose whether they want to be brushed.

LITERARY LINK

Old McDonald had a farm
e-i-e-i-oh
And on this farm he had a goat
e-i-e-i-oh
With a bleat-bleat here
And a bleat-bleat there
Here a bleat, there a bleat
Everywhere a bleat-bleat
Old McDonald had a farm
e-i-e-i-oh

Bonus
Fact: Goats in different countries bleat with different accents!

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ACTIVITY 2

AREA: SAVANNA AND HIGH PLAINS
ANIMAL: WHITE RHINOCEROS

GUIDING QUESTION:

How can a big, tough rhino still be sensitive?

INSTRUCTIONS:

Look carefully at the skin of the rhino. Ask students whether it looks rough or smooth, thick or thin. Explain that even with thick, rough skin, rhinos are still very sensitive! They definitely feel it when things touch their skin, and can even get a sunburn. Having discussions about what different animals need increases children's empathy. In this case, the rhinos need shade and mud to protect them from the sun's harsh rays. Rhinos will wallow in mud to coat their skin against sun and bugs. Talk about ways we protect ourselves from getting a sunburn. How would you like to get covered in mud next time you are playing in the sun?

EXHIBIT LINK

Look for a mud wallow in the rhino yard. Harmon, the rhino who lives here, loves mud baths, and he also loves playing with big logs. In fact, when he was moved to Madison, the Zoo needed a special permit to transport lumber across state lines so that Harmon could bring his favorite log along with him to his new home.

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ACTIVITY 3

AREA: HERPETARIUM
ANIMAL: LICHENOSE LEAF-TAILED GECKO

GUIDING QUESTION:

Where would you climb if you had sticky feet?

INSTRUCTIONS:

Look for the geckos stuck against the glass where students can see their super cool toes. Explain that geckos' toes are lined with thousands of teeny tiny hairs which make their feet sticky enough to climb straight up a glass wall. And, when they want to unstick themselves, they actually bend their toes in the opposite direction to the way our toes bend. Ask kids why might a gecko want to be able to climb?

Ask students to imagine having such sticky feet and hands that they could cling anywhere they wanted. They could climb walls, hang from the ceiling, or hide in the branches of a tall tree – like a leaf-tailed gecko does! Then see how many camouflaged leaf-tailed geckos they can find hiding in the exhibit.

HISTORY HIGHLIGHT

The Discovery Center and Herpetarium originally opened in 1993. This building houses the zoo's hands-on learning center. At the exploration stations in the Discovery Center, kids can use microscopes and magnifying lenses to view the fine details of feathers, scales, and eggs.

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ACTIVITY 4

AREA: ARCTIC PASSAGE
ANIMAL: HARBOR SEALS

GUIDING QUESTION:

What can you say with bubbles?

INSTRUCTIONS:

The harbor seals are usually quite active in the water; an enjoyable scene for young learners. Frame this exciting viewing experience through an empathy lens. Remind students that tapping on the glass is not permitted because it can cause stress to the animals. Take a moment to let students think about why that might be stressful, how it compares to something they may have experienced, and what kind of environment would feel peaceful to the seals (and to us)! Ask the students how they feel when they are watching the seals?

Direct students to look for air bubbles that the seals blow when they dive. Ask them if they have ever blown bubbles underwater, in a swimming pool or in the bathtub. Blowing bubbles is fun! What else is fun to do in the water? Can seals do that, too? Ask students what they would do if they could swim in the seal pool (without the seals in it)?

In the wild, male seals are known to blow bubbles to attract a mate. It can also be a sign of dominance. Young seals blow bubbles as part of their play.

CAREER CALL OUT

Part of the job of a zookeeper is making sure the animals get fed. Seal feedings happen on the deck (upper water viewing) most afternoons.

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ACTIVITY 5

AREA: FLAMINGOS (NEAR CHILDREN'S ZOO)
ANIMAL: CHILEAN FLAMINGO

GUIDING QUESTION:

How many friends does a flamingo need?

INSTRUCTIONS:

Explain that flamingos live in groups called flocks. A flock of Chilean flamingos can be fairly small, with just three, four, or five birds living together; or, a flock can include more than 10,000 birds!

Ask students to form small flamingo flocks, standing in groups of three, four, or five - on one leg, of course! Challenge students to compete to see who can stand on one leg the longest! While they are balancing, describe how some flamingos live in very large groups but in thsoe large flocks, they usually have only a few close flamingo friends.

Now, invite them to imagine having ten thousand friends in their group. Could they possibly play with them all? If you were a flamingo, do you think you could be friends with everyone in your flock? As it turns out, even Chilean flamingos living in massive flocks primarily only spend time with two to six “friends” in that group.

JOIN OUR FLOCK

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@henryvilaszoo

Tag us when you post about your field trip experience to inspire other teachers!

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