

PRIMATE BEHAVIOR RESEARCH

Students observe and analyze the natural behaviors of primate species at the NC Zoo.

Grade Level
3-12

Theme:
Adaptations
Habitats

Curriculum Connections:
S, M

Materials:

- Primate Behavior Observation Sheet
- Pencils

Observation is a critical element in the scientific process. This activity familiarizes students with the process of observing and recording animal behavior and how to use collected data to make informed inferences from the data collected about the animal's natural behavior.

Using the observation sheet on page two, instruct students to:

1) Choose one primate species to observe. The animal will be observed in 5-minute sessions. Every 15 seconds students will take a "snapshot" of the animal's behavior, at that moment, and record their observations by placing checkmarks in the appropriate box as shown below. More than one behavior can be observed during each snapshot.

Time	Sit	Lie	Grooming	Eating
Start	✓		✓	
15 sec.				✓
30 sec				✓
45 sec				✓
1 minute		✓		

2) Once the students have collected the data, students will write additional notes reflecting on their observations. Use exhibit interpretive signs to research additional information that will assist in analyzing the data collected.

3) As a follow up, students can summarize and graph the data to show the occurrence of each behavior during the observation period, and compare the behavior of different primate species at NC Zoo.

Pre-Observation Extension

Conduct a lesson focusing on the scientific method and the application of this method to performing research in a zoo. Focus on developing research questions to guide animal observations and data collection. The research question should be one that can be answered in the amount of time you have to observe the animal. For example "Do young animals spend more time playing than adult animals?"; "Do males and females spend the same amount of time eating?". From their research questions, students will develop a hypotheses that can be tested by observation.

PRIMATE BEHAVIOR OBSERVATION SHEET

Species Observed: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____ Weather: _____

TIME	Resting	Sleeping	Climbing	Walking	Running	Eating	Drinking	Groom others	Groom self	Manipulate objects		
Start												
15 sec.												
30 sec												
45 sec												
1 minute												
1 min. 15 sec												
1 min. 30 sec												
1 min. 45 sec												
2 minutes												
2 min. 15 sec												
2 min. 30 sec												
2 min. 45 sec												
3 minutes												
3 min. 15 sec												
3 min. 30 sec												
3 min. 45 sec												
4 minutes												
4 min. 15 sec												
4 min. 30 sec												
4 min. 45 sec												
5 minutes												