

Animals Alike and Different

We've created Zoo Tracks to guide your educational visit to Lincoln Park Zoo, complete with animal descriptions to prompt discussions with your students.

Individual animals of the same species often look slightly different from each other. Presence of antlers, different stripe patterns, and color of an individual's fur are just a few examples. In this installment of Zoo Tracks — titled Animals Alike and Different — we'll use careful observation skills to spot these similarities and differences.

Obviously different...

When animals of the same species look very different, it's often related to gender or age. Males may have body parts such as antlers that females do not. In other cases, males and females are different colors or sizes. There can be advantages to these differences. A male might rely on antlers to compete for territory or mates. Drab coloring of a female and her offspring may provide camouflage for protection. Color differences can help members of social groups recognize offspring that need extra care.

...or almost the same.

With some species, members look nearly identical. With careful observation, however, you may notice unique patterns or simple variations in color of hair, feathers and fur. These animals can tell one another apart, but scientists must rely on observation skills to detect these small differences and identify individual animals they are studying. Sometimes scientists use colorful, non-harmful bands to help with this identification.

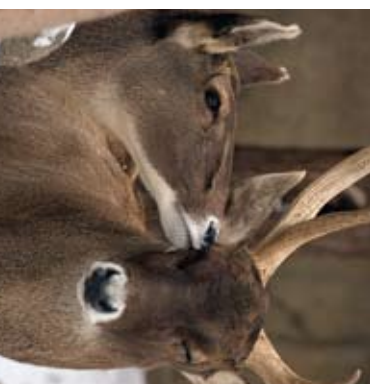
What Now?

At the Zoo...

Apply what you learned about observing individual animals as you explore the rest of the zoo.

Back at Home...

- Locate a flock of pigeons. What are some of the coloration patterns you see? Is one more common than the other?
 - Domestic cats are a single species, yet their fur can be many different colors and patterns. Think about the cats you know. Do some have color patterns more common than others?
 - In many common bird species, males and females may look different from each other. Use a field guide to explore the birds in your neighborhood. Can you find examples of these differences?
- Want to Know More?**
- Lincoln Park Zoo has different education programs that can help you learn even more about our zoo animals and their wild relatives. To discover what's coming up, visit our website: www.lpzoo.org/education.



Let's Make Tracks!

Visit these five animals and conduct your own observations to identify individual differences. Start with #1 and work your way through the zoo!

If an animal is not visible on the day of your visit, simply add an exhibit of your choice.

1. Inca Terns



In this open exhibit space there are many different species of birds. You can identify the Inca terns by their gray body and red beak and legs. They are also very curious and may be spotted close to the viewing platform.

- Can you identify the Inca terns from the other birds?
- Can you use their identification leg bands to tell one individual from another?

2. Red-footed Tortoise



The carapace (top shell) of a tortoise has a colorful covering of keratin. This protein also makes up your fingernails and hair. While all members of a species will have similar carapace patterns, you can find small differences between individual shells.

- Select one tortoise. Point out two ways you can tell it apart from the others in this exhibit.

3. White-lipped Deer



Only male deer have antlers, which they use to compete for territory and mates. Antlers begin growing in spring and are shed in winter. Notice different stages of this growth process depending on the season of your visit.

- What stage of antler growth do you see today?
- Sometimes you can see our male using his antlers. What do you see him doing?

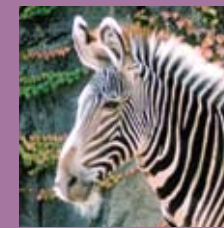
4. Western Lowland Gorillas



Like many primates, gorillas often live in groups with one fully grown male, one or more females, and young of different ages. The fully grown male, the silverback, is easily identified by his large size and silver coloration. Each of our gorillas has unique facial features and body shapes that also help identify them.

- Can you identify the adult male and females?
- Can you identify the juvenile or young gorillas?

5. Grevy's Zebras



You may already know that no two zebras have the same stripe pattern. Some scientists think this is how zebras can distinguish between different animals and find each other in large herds. Some biologists use computers to study stripe patterns and to keep track of individual zebras.

- Can you identify a difference in stripe pattern to tell our zebras apart?
- Is there any other way you can tell them apart?

