

Houston Zoo at Home

SWAP SHOP

Eye-Naturalist

Ages 5 and up

Naturalists love spending time exploring their favorite spaces and observing to learn more about their surroundings. Here is a chance to be a naturalist in your own green space. Grab your paper and pencils (adults too) and get outside to search for special items to sketch!

Materials Needed:

- Paper
- Drawing tools (pencils, crayons, etc.)
- Hard surface to write and draw on (like a schoolbook or clipboard)

Steps:

1. Find a green space that you feel comfortable visiting. It can be your balcony, backyard or favorite park. If you can't get outside, opt for searching for natural or eye-catching items in your home.
2. Take 5 to 10 minutes of exploring this green space looking for something that piques your interest.
3. After your time is up, have the family gather back together and pick one person to go first.
4. The first person will describe their item in as much detail as possible to everyone else who will try to guess and draw the item.
5. After completing the drawings, each family member will show their creation and the person with the item will reveal it to everyone else.
6. What new questions do we have about the object after seeing it? What more can we learn about the item by looking at it closely?
7. Whoever guesses correctly, can take a turn describing one of their found objects. Take turns sharing out and sketching until everyone has a chance to go.

Level Up: Collect your nature items and create a treasure chest or find a safe space to keep them. Every time you go out to explore, you can find new treasures to add. Once the Zoo reopens, come visit us at the Swap Shop and bring your natural items to share and swap!

If you are interested in learning more about your items, try downloading the app, iNaturalist. It can help to ID many different plant and animal species.

Share your project with us!

Tag your photo using #HoustonZoo or email us your story at communications@houstonzoo.org.

All About the Bones

All Ages

Vertebrates, or animals with bones, are overwhelmingly outnumbered by their counterparts who have exoskeletons, shells, or soft bodies. Of all the species discovered, only about 4% of them do. When scientists uncover bones, or preserved remains in substances like amber, it's pretty special! Bones can tell us a lot about our past, present, and how species may grow and evolve in our future. Try your hand at crafting your own edible skeletons and creating your own imaginative creatures. What will the bone structures tell us about your animal?

Materials Needed*

- Long, round snacks (pretzel sticks, celery, carrot sticks, cheese sticks, etc.)
- Round bite sized snacks (marshmallows, mini peanut butter cups, grapes, cherries, etc.)
- White dipping sauces (for savory try out ranch or queso and for sweet try out melted white chocolate).
- Toothpicks

Steps: Follow the link to create your own edible bones: <https://www.awortheyread.com/pretzel-bones/>

**Please take note of any special allergy needs when choosing ingredients and substitute accordingly*

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