

ENRICH ENCOURAGING NATURAL RESPONSES IN CREATIVE HABITATS

Enrichment is a process for improving or enhancing animal environments and care within the context of their behavioral biology and natural history. Essentially what our acronym states: Encouraging natural behaviors.

Why Enrich?

1. Good husbandry practice
2. Animals are engaged
3. Guests love to see it!



How do we enrich here at the zoo?

There are two ways to look at enrichment, what it **is** and what it **does**. What it **is** would describe the senses and how animals can interact with it:

1. Smell
 - The Natural Encounters offers love sniffing ginger root. Carnivores love rolling/rubbing, scenting over perfumes.
2. Taste
 - Carnivores get blood pops in the summer. CZ cows love watermelons
3. Sound
 - Radios in the indoor holding areas, wind chimes, rain sticks, etc. We can even play sounds of other animals!
4. Touch
 - Primates might get different substrates like hay, sand, or wood shavings. CZ swift fox can have snake sheds.
5. Sight
 - The pygmy marmosets in Natural Encounters love watching TV and the disco ball. Carnivore keepers can use a laser pointer just like with your cat at home

What enrichment **does**, applies to the behaviors it elicits. Instead of placing enrichment according to what the item is, a keeper might try and consider what behavior they are trying to *encourage*. They have a list of natural behaviors that might include jumping, playing, or even sleeping in guest view!

Things keepers consider when placing enrichment

1. Safety
 - a. Could the animal get caught/wrapped up in the item?
 - b. Is there a choking hazard?
 - c. Could it fall on the animal?
 - d. What is the animal's past history with enrichment?
2. Testing
 - a. Keepers should try to break, drop, and dismantle the enrichment device to determine if the animal might do the same.
 - b. The first time an item is given to an animal, it should be closely supervised.
 - c. If possible, give a small amount of the item at first]
 - d. Give the item in an area where it could be taken away or the animal shifted away if there is a problem
 - e. The item should be tested with each individual animal, Do not make assumptions based on the reaction of another animal of the same species

Using SPIDER to set up an enrichment program

S
Setting Goals

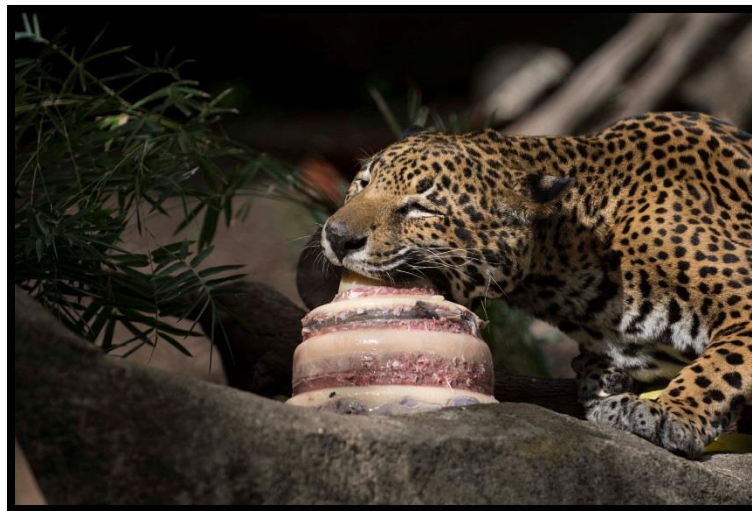
P
Planning

I
Implementing

D
Documenting

E
Evaluating

R
Readjusting



If we are looking at a particular animal that may be new to the zoo, have a specific issue, or may just be difficult to enrich, Zoo staff will go through this process in order to approach enrichment from a focused, purposeful view.

1. Setting goals – keepers create a list of goals they would like to see. They then narrow those goals depending on the scope or importance of listed goals.
2. Planning – once the goal or goals have been decided, keeper then list out ways to achieve those goals. These ways can include specific enrichment items or even how to present specific items.
3. Implementing – Pretty self-explanatory; keepers run the program as planned
4. Document – As the plan is implemented, keepers should document results and reactions
5. Evaluating – Keepers review the documentation and determine if it was successful
6. Readjusting – Readjust as necessary and go through the steps again as needed

What animals get enrichment at the zoo?

All of them! Each species interacts with their environment in different ways, so keepers have to approach enrichment with the unique needs of the species in mind. You may see the octopus utilizing her dexterity to pull shrimp out of a puzzle feeder. A snake might be enjoying a new rock or log with fun scents on it. Macaws might be chewing on fruit kabobs. Enrichment might be as subtle as a new prop or substrate in the habitat or as obvious as a mongoose ball pit!



Answering guest questions

Please refer to the volunteer handbook for "Difficult Questions" as we guide you on how to answer some of the sensitive things guests might ask. Some of their questions tend to revolve around animal activity (or lack thereof). If animals are sleeping or resting, it is good to point out they are doing what they would be doing normally in the wild. It is also a good place to talk about the zoo's enrichment program and all of the amazing things we do to help encourage those natural behaviors. For example: Did you know the cheetahs leave zoo grounds a couple of times a month from September until May so they can run at the Houston Dynamo practice fields? They have been clocked at 56mph!




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► ENCOURAGING NATURAL RESPONSES IN CREATIVE HABITATS ◀
IS SOMETHING THAT ZOOKEEPERS DO EVERYDAY

ONE OF THE WAYS that zookeepers encourage natural behaviors is by providing novel items (like the plastic toy pictured here). Carnivores pull, tug, carry, drag, chew, stalk, chase, claw, and grip these items similar to the way they would prey items in the wild. Zookeepers provide a different type of enrichment for the animals everyday. We alternate between toys, substrate, novel food items, bones, visual/auditory stimuli, in addition to training.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO PURCHASE ITEMS FOR THE ANIMALS TO PLAY WITH VISIT OUR WISH LIST AT WWW.AMAZON.COM

SIMPLY GO TO AMAZON.COM, CLICK THE REGISTRY TAB, ENTER THE HOUSTON ZOO, AND LOOK FOR WAYS TO HELP US ENRICH!



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ENRICHMENT AT THE HOUSTON ZOO, VISIT WWW.HOUSTONZOO.ORG

