This week, Brookfield Zoo Animal Care staff are presenting animals that live in all parts of the world. They have unique body markings and different ways to move around. People who look closely at animals for similarities or differences are good observers and often record what they see.

Be a Nature Observer
Create your own binoculars

Materials:
Two toilet paper tubes, tape, yarn/string or an old shoe lace, a hole punch

Instructions:
1. Tape the two tubes side by side so you can look through them.
2. Use a hole punch to make one hole near the same end of each tube.
3. Loop the string through the holes and tie it to the tubes.
4. Decorate them as you wish!

Play!
With an adult, take your homemade binoculars outside to explore your yard or neighborhood and observe the many wonderful natural items in it. Below are some things you can look for with your binoculars. Circle the things you find (you may not be able to find everything on the list or may find more!).

Animals
That can fly
That hop
That jump or bounce
That walk on four legs

Plants
With white flowers
With yellow flowers
With skinny leaves
New ones growing through the ground

Trees
With prickly needles (evergreen)
That have buds at the tips of branches
That have smooth bark
That have rough or bumpy bark

Non-living
Rocks with sharp edges
Rocks with smooth edges
Twigs or branches
Pieces of bark or mulch
One of the many reasons Brookfield Zoo cares for animals so well is because our animal care staff and scientists have spent many hours observing animals closely to understand their physical and social needs. Scientists do this for a variety of species—animals that are solitary for most of their adults lives, such as servals, and animals that live in a social structure, such as zebras.

Learn to Observe
The study of the behavior and relationships among animals is called “ethology.” Scientists use charts and tables and definitions of behaviors to observe animals. This is called an “ethogram.” Observing can help us learn more about individual animals or entire species, which can help zoos and aquariums make better decisions about their care. What we learn from observing animals in zoos can also be used in the conservation of that species in the wild. Sharpen your observation skills by using the ethogram below on an animal in your home or outside your window.

Observation Sheet
Choose an animal to observe. Read the list of activities below. Spend a few moments defining how the species of animal you chose behaves when performing each activity. For instance, if you are observing a squirrel, “Rest” may mean sitting on a tree branch and being still; “Move” may mean running, leaping, or climbing; “Eat” may mean gathering food or eating food. It is important to have consistency in how you record behaviors you see. Begin by filling in the definitions for the species you choose.

Species Chosen: ____________________________________________________________

Rest: ____________________________________________________________

Move: ____________________________________________________________

Play: ____________________________________________________________

Eat: ____________________________________________________________

Other (anything that isn’t already listed above): ____________________________________________________________
Observe an animal for 3 minutes noting its behavior every 15 seconds. Is it resting, moving, eating, playing, or doing something else? It’s helpful to have a partner call out “time” when 15 seconds has passed so you can observe the behavior and check the appropriate box.

Date: ___________________ Observer Name(s): ________________________________________________

Time of Day: ___________ Temperature/Weather: ____________________________________________

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Summarize your data.
- Tally how many times you observed each behavior.
- What does your data tell you about that animal?
- Why was it important to record the time of day? The weather?
- Do you think observing one animal for 3 minutes is enough to tell you about its natural behaviors? Why or why not?
- How would you collect more information on this animal or species?