

## Observing Animals

**Subject:** Observing animals in nature, expanding the realm of nature journaling

**Duration:** Field Trip

**Setting:** Variable (ideally a zoo, animal refuge, or large park where wildlife are present)

**Materials:** Journal, pencil

**National Standards** – LS1.A, LS1.B, LS2.A, LS2.B, LS2.D, LS4.A, LS4.B

**Guiding Theme:** Action-nature journaling! Teaching students to work quickly and write down observations because animal encounters can be brief.

### Activity Instructions

1. This lesson is designed for a field trip, ideally to a beach or park. This will allow students to view a variety of wildlife and extend the amount of time they can observe an animal.
2. Students can, and are encouraged to, use 2-3 pages for this assignment. The animal might move around a lot.
3. This will be the first journal entry of a non-plant or stationary item. Often Animal Encounters spark a lot of questions and observations. Emphasize to students that this is a good activity to focus on their INIWIRMOs.

### Suggestions for Drawing the Animal

Animals might move around a lot. Students should start with a quick sketch, and then fill in the drawing. It is okay if students only get partway through a drawing, and then the animal moves. Encourage them to try drawing it again in a new location and position.

Things to notice and pay attention to with the animal:

- Physical parts (head, body, eyes, feet/flippers, etc.)
- How it moves
- How it interacts with its habitat
- How it behaves
- How it eats
- How it reacts to other animals, or humans

### **Discussion Questions**

What was different about observing an animal versus a plant or tree?

Did you notice anything new about the animal that you have never noticed before?

Did you notice anything surprising about the animal?

How was your animal different when it was moving compared to when it was still?

Example Journal Entry:

Kenai Fjords NP - Top of the Cliffs  
August 4, 2021  
Overcast, 55°F

Marmot squats  
back-end, keeps  
head up

Chubby  
body



I notice the marmot  
was eating plants

Fluffy  
tail

Small claws



Small ears

Boxy-shaped head

It reminds  
me of prairie  
dogs and meerkats  
standing up alert

I notice the hoary marmot  
stayed alert to my presence

I wonder why the marmot  
stood upon its hind legs

I hear other marmots  
whistling

I notice the  
marmot sat just  
outside of its burrow

I wonder if standing up helps  
the marmots hear each other

Eyes are on each side  
of head - almond-shaped

Thick  
whiskers

