**Reading a Natural History Specimen**

What can you learn from an animal that has been preserved? Use the questions in the left column as a guide in making observations, inferences, and deductions as Zion National Park researchers do when studying natural history specimens. Record your findings in the right column.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Presentation, Properties, and Features of a Specimen** | **Observations, Inferences, and Deductions** |
| * Describe any labels or text found with the specimen.
* After studying the label or text, what specific background information is shared about the history of the specimen?
* Does the appearance of the specimen give clues as to how it was collected and preserved? Explain.
* What purpose does the specimen serve in the collection based upon its appearance? (public education exhibit, research, artistic, etc.)
* Is the specimen in good, fair, or poor condition?
* What general kind of animal is it? What species?
* Carefully examine individual body parts and describe characteristics of each. (skin, fur, feathers, head, teeth, ears, feet, body shape, etc.)
* What do you think it feels like when touched?
* Is it a carnivore, herbivore, or omnivore?
* How do you think the colors of the body are beneficial to survival?
* Is it female or male?
* How long is it? How tall is it? How much do you think it weighs when alive?
* What stage of its lifecycle was it in when it died?
 |  |