

Discovery Tour



Bats

Let's take a close look at bats. They have plenty of special features, but the easiest to see are the wings! Bats are great flyers that use their flying skills to catch insects. You might know about a group of prehistoric creatures that were also amazing flyers--pterosaurs! Pterosaurs were flying reptiles that lived in the Mesozoic Era, the Age of Dinosaurs, but they aren't dinosaurs themselves. The most famous pterosaurs are pteranodons, like Tiny, Shiny, and Don! But pterosaurs came in a lot of different sizes, from tiny bat-like Peteinosaurus to giant, airplane-sized Quetzalcoatlus! The biggest pterosaur, Quetzalcoatlus, had a wingspan—the distance from one wingtip to the other—of about 40 feet, around the same length as a T. rex! How big is your wingspan? Stretch out your arms and measure from the tip of one hand to the tip of the other!



Birds

Great job! You've found the dinosaurs! I mean, the birds! Well, actually, they're both. You see, all living birds are the direct descendents of theropod dinosaurs that lived long ago in the Jurassic time period! And that means birds are really living dinosaurs! Because birds are such close cousins of ancient raptors like Velociraptor, these animals share a lot in common, including feathers, hollow bones, and three-toed feet! So the next time you go bird watching you'll really be dinosaur watching! Pay attention today, how many birds will you see? Try and count them!



Crocodile

Let's look closely at the crocodiles. What does their skin look like? Crocodiles have thick, scaly skin for protection. Some dinosaurs also had thick skin, and even bony armor, to help protect them from predators. For example, ankylosaurs like Ankylosaurus and Euplocephalus were plant eaters with bony armor from the tips of their noses to the tips of their tails! Some even had a club at the end of the tail that was probably used to fight off meat-eating dinosaurs. Sometimes we humans need a little protection too. When it's really sunny, what do you put on your skin to protect it from sunburn? And if you go for a bike ride, what do you wear to protect your head? What else can you think of?



Elephant

Elephants are big mammals with big ears to match. Those giant ears are used not just for hearing, but for getting cool on a hot day. When elephants fan their ears back and forth, the blood inside those ears cools down. Then, when that blood goes back into the body, it makes the whole elephant cooler! Millions of years ago, a dinosaur named Stegosaurus might have used parts of its body to cool off too. Those giant plates running along the back may cooled down the blood of this big plant-eater, which then could have helped cool the whole body! Sounds like a great way to chill out! How about making a paper fan on a hot day and see how much you cool off?!

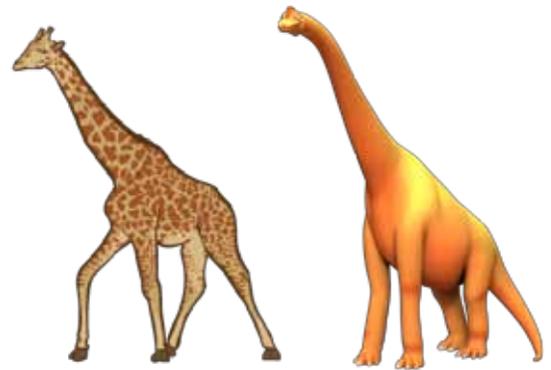


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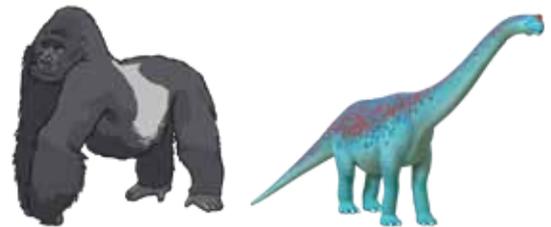
Giraffe

Wow, look at how tall that giraffe is! With its really long neck the giraffe is able to reach up high into the trees to eat leaves. Giraffes are herbivores that can eat vegetation from the bottom, middle and tops of trees. Brachiosaurus was a HUGE dinosaur with very similar features. It too was a herbivore that loved plants and had a really long neck for eating leaves high in the trees. Brachiosaurus was so tall, it could eat plants 40 feet off the ground; that's as tall as 4 school buses stacked on top of each other! How high can you reach?



Gorilla

Hey, you've found the gorillas! Like us, gorillas belong to a group of mammals called primates. Gorillas are the biggest primates alive today. With those sharp teeth up front, you might guess that gorillas are carnivores, but actually they're herbivores. In fact, most big animals are plant-eaters. Think about dinosaurs. By far the largest dinosaurs were the herbivores called sauropods, like Brachiosaurus and Diplodocus, with their long necks and long tails. Some, like Argentinosaurus, grew to be about 100 feet long! That's more than twice the length of a school bus, and it makes sauropods the largest land animals that ever lived! So, when you see other big animals at the zoo today, ask yourself, "do they like to eat plants or meat?"



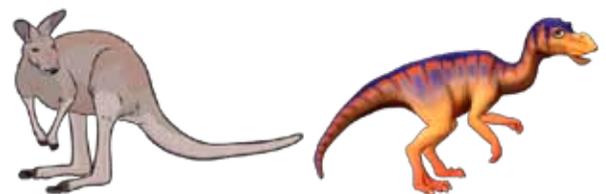
Insects

As you walk around the zoo, or even your own neighborhood, see if you can find any bees, dragonflies or beetles. Each of these insects has a unique feature that makes it special. Bees eat nectar from flowers, which helps make more flowers. Dragonflies are expert predators that can fly forward, up, down, and backward! Beetles come in many different sizes, but most of them can fly and a few of them—called fireflies—can even glow! Insects like these lived alongside the dinosaurs in the Mesozoic Era! So the next time you see a bee, a dragonfly, or a beetle, remember, those amazing creatures have been around for millions of years! How many different insects can you find in your neighborhood? Start a journal to keep track of them!



Kangaroo

Kangaroos belong to a family of mammals called marsupials. Like other marsupials, kangaroo moms carry their babies, called Joeys, in a pouch to protect them and keep them warm. Yup, kangaroos make excellent mothers! Paleontologists have discovered a dinosaur that was probably a terrific mother too. In fact, its name, Maiasaura, means "good mother lizard." Maiasaura lived and nested in groups, like many birds do today. After hatching from their eggs, the babies stayed in the nest, maybe for weeks. During that time, the Maiasaura moms probably brought food to the hungry little dinosaurs. Have you ever taken care of an animal? What about a plant? What do you think you would need to care for animals and plants so that they can grow up to be healthy?

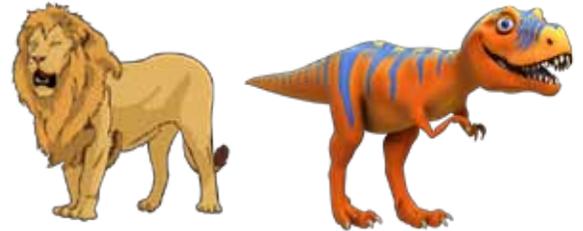


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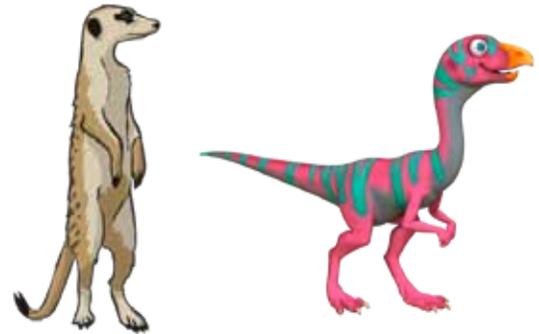
Lion

Do you know what scientists call animals that eat meat? That's right, carnivores! Lions use their big sharp teeth to catch and eat their prey. Now, can you think of a giant dinosaur with plenty of long, sharp teeth? That's right—Tyrannosaurus Rex! T. rexes share a lot in common with lions. Both are big carnivores and excellent hunters. And just like lions, T. rex used its keen eyesight and sense of smell to hunt down prey. Then those sharp teeth came in handy for eating all that meat! What's the farthest thing you can see right now? What can you smell?



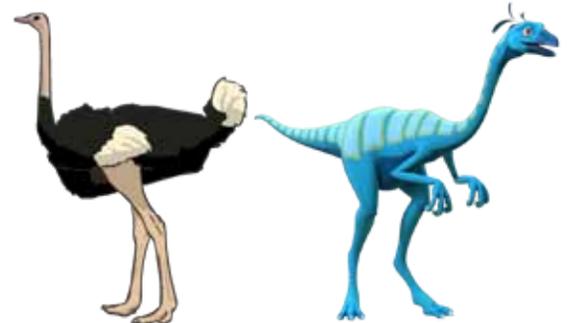
Meerkat

Meerkats are burrowing animals; they dig underground tunnels to live in. The burrows help to protect the meerkats from predators and provide cooling relief from the hot sun. Oryctodromeus was a dinosaur that shared a few features with meerkats. It too dug underground burrows, and lived in them at least part of the time. Oryctodromeus used its arms, snout and tail to dig. Scientists think that this dinosaur used burrows to protect its babies from predators. How would you dig a burrow? What tools would you need?



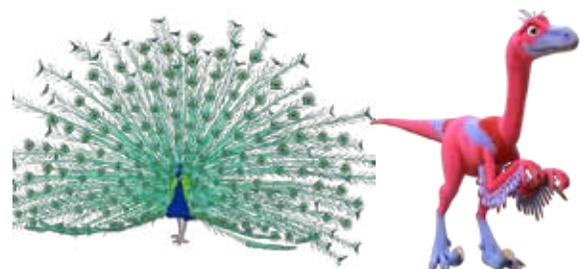
Ostrich

Ostriches are some of the largest land birds on earth. Even though they can't fly, they can run really fast using those long legs. Scientists call animals that walk on their back legs "bipedal." Say, I know someone else that walks on its back legs...humans! That's right; humans and ostriches have something in common, we're both bipedal. Ostriches also have a lot in common with a theropod dinosaur called Ornithomimus. Both have a small head, a long neck, and strong legs that help them run really fast! Can you name any other bipedal animals? See if you can count how many you see at the zoo today.



Peacock

You found the peacocks at the zoo! The really colorful ones are the males—the boy peacocks; they use their beautiful feathers for showing off to the girl peacocks. Theropod dinosaurs like Velociraptor also had feathers, but they couldn't fly. Like peacocks, these ancient dinosaurs probably used their feathers to show off, and to stay warm as well. Feathers would also have come in handy to keep eggs warm, just like they do for birds today. Now, take a close look at that male peacock. How many different colors can you see in those amazing feathers?



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Polar Bear

Check out the beautiful white fur of the polar bear! Up in the snowy Arctic, that fur is camouflage; it helps the bears blend into their surroundings. Blending in makes polar bears better predators because seals and other prey animals have a tough time seeing them. We don't know for sure, but it's likely that many dinosaurs used camouflage as well. Small dinosaurs like Lesothosaurus may have used camouflage to hide from predators. By blending into their surroundings, camouflage coloring would have made it tough for predators to find them! As you walk around the zoo today, see if you can find any other animals that use camouflage. What would you wear if you wanted to blend into your surroundings?



Reptiles

You've found the Reptile House! Look around. How many different kinds of reptiles can you see? When dinosaurs were first discovered, scientists thought that they looked like giant lizards. Today, we know that dinosaurs were much more like birds than lizards. But dinosaurs and reptiles do share some important features. Like modern day reptiles and birds, prehistoric dinosaurs laid eggs and built nests. Scientists have even discovered large nesting colonies where many dinosaurs built their nests close together. Discoveries like these are helping scientists understand dinosaur behavior. See if you can discover something about a reptile today!



Rhinoceros

Wow, you found a rhinoceros! Check out that big, sharp horn at the end of its nose. Can you think of a dinosaur with a similar horn? That's right, Triceratops! Triceratops has three big, sharp horns, one over the nose and one over each eye. Like the rhinoceros, Triceratops was a herbivore, an animal that only ate plants. Both rhinos and Triceratops are huge animals, but they're also low to the ground, which means they have to eat low-growing plants. Do you want to be a herbivore today? What would you eat?



Wolves

Wow, you found wolves at the zoo! Wolves are mammals, like us, but they share a lot in common with ancient theropod dinosaurs like Deinonychus. Like wolves, Deinonychus were meat-eaters, or carnivores, and they hunted other animals. Some paleontologists think that Deinonychus and some other theropods, like Tyrannosaurus rex, lived and hunted in groups, or "packs," just like wolves do. Pack hunting allows wolves to go after prey that are much bigger than they are, like caribou and moose. If some meat-eating dinosaurs lived in packs, they too might have hunted animals that were bigger than they were. Can you think of any other predators alive today that live in groups?

