The Variety of Life: Classification

Key Stage 1

Length of Session:
90 minutes: 45 min object handling session followed by 45 minute self-guided trail in the Museum.

Maximum group size:
32 children plus 4 members of staff.

Session outline

• What’s the difference between a vertebrate and an invertebrate? How do we group all the animals on our planet? Use our touchable specimens to find out.
• Also, discover who Carl Linnaeus was and why his system of classification is so important for scientists (do you know how many common names there are for woodlice?!).
• Children closely observe differences and similarities between types of animals, before sorting the vertebrates into their major classes.

National Curriculum Areas:
Science: Working scientifically; Animals including humans; Living things and their habitats.
Suggestions for pre-visit activities

• Talk about what characteristics make animals different to plants and which characteristics all animals share.
• Get children to sort some pictures of common animals into groups and discuss what criteria they have used and how their groups are different from each other.
• Discuss the children's favourite animals, why they like them and whether they think they might see them in the Museum.

Suggestions for post-visit activities

• Play animal themed 20 questions, starting with ‘Are you a mammal/amphibian/bird etc.’
• Make non-fiction guide books with chapters on the major animal groups.
• Develop a wall display of the tree of life.
• Investigate the tree of life and classification on our Learning More webpages at... http://www.oum.ox.ac.uk/thezone/animals/animalid/index.htm

Learning Outcomes

• Understanding that animals can be grouped according to recognisable features.
• Knowledge that there is a scientific system of classification.
• Understanding that common names are different to scientific names.
• The ability to classify previously unknown animals within major classes.
• Awareness that animals which share common features are often closely related.

For further details and to book your visit, contact: education@oum.ox.ac.uk