

Discover Asian Forest Animals

Chaperone-Led Field Investigation



Dear Chaperone,

Please guide your students through the following observations. As you ask them the following questions allow them to think about their answers and encourage them to come up with questions of their own. The purpose of this activity is not for them to get all the “right” answers but rather to allow them to practice questioning and observation skills.

Find the elephants. Watch how they use their trunks. What do you think their trunks help them to do?

They use their trunks to put their food and water into their mouths. They are able to reach tall growing tree leaves, grasses on the ground or low-lying water in holes. They use their trunks to breathe and to smell and touch each other with. They also use their trunk like an arm and a hand to pick things up. They also like to throw dirt and water on their backs to stay cool on a hot day.

Find the tigers. What are they doing?

The tigers are most likely sleeping. They sleep about 18 hours a day. They aren't lazy! Sleeping helps these powerful predators conserve valuable energy.

How do a tiger's stripes help them survive in the forest?

Their stripes help them camouflage with forest plants and the forest floor (tall grasses, bamboo, trees, etc.) They need to sneak up on their prey, so the closer they can get without being seen, the better the chances of catching dinner! Stripes also help them camouflage with the ground when sleeping (which is why it might take the kids a minute to find them!)

Find the gibbons and/or the siamangs (two kinds of apes). How are they different from some of the other animals you've seen in the forest today?

These apes may be resting in their special hammocks. They live mostly in the tree tops close to their food (they mostly eat leaves and flowers) and safe from most predators. Sometimes they will rest or socialize on the ground if they feel safe. Their long arms are very strong and help them to swing from branch to branch. They don't have whiskers, claws, or trunks. They don't walk on four legs or have tails.

Find the tapir. Look closely at all of its body parts. What makes them special?

Kids can get creative with their answers. Have them look carefully at the unique characteristics of this animal (feet, nose, ears, tail, eyes, coloration). Kids may wonder why they are black and white. Tapirs are nocturnal so their coloring helps break up their outline in the dark. When they are searching for plants to eat at night on the forest floor they are nearly impossible to see. Tapirs look like anteaters but they don't eat ants they eat plants.

Why do you think the tapir has such a long nose?

It is used much like an elephant's nose. This stubby version of a trunk helps the tapir grab plants and bring them closer to their mouths to eat!

Would you like to visit a real forest in Asia to see these animals in the wild?