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Juvenile Nonfiction

At the Zoo: Explore the Animal World with Craft Fun
Judy Press
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Take a trip to the zoo without leaving home! A trip to the store might be in order, though, to get the simple supplies called for by this book, which offers instructions for thirty-five craft projects. Two- to seven-year-olds will enjoy creating and playing with all kinds of animals found at the zoo, from a piglet to a red-eyed tree frog, from a fish to an Adelie penguin.

The introduction explains what a zoo is, who the zookeeper and veterinarian are, and where the food for the animals comes from. The concepts of extinct and endangered animals are explained (a special stamp indicates endangered species). “A Message to Grownups” includes a brief statement about the concept of the book and some suggestions for doing the projects.

There are seven chapters: African Safari, Tropical Forest, Animals & Their Young, Inside the Aquarium, The Reptile House, The Northern Forest, and The Big Cats. Each chapter begins with illustrations of the projects, and a world map showing where each animal is found in the wild. Animals from all continents are represented.

There are craft activities to appeal to everyone, and skill levels are given a rating of one, two, or three scissors. Younger children will enjoy making the snake, snowshoe hare, and tiger. Two-scissors projects include the brown bear, gorilla, porcupine, sea horse, and trumpeter swan and cygnet. The most challenging three-scissors projects include a Komodo dragon, llama and cria, spotted owl, toucan and zebra. The supply lists include easily obtained items such as glue, tape, construction paper, child safety scissors, tempera paints, paper plates, and egg cartons.

“Little Hands Story Corner” suggests books and videos about some animals. “Ask the Zookeeper” answers questions like “Why do llamas spit?” (to discipline their young, to fight over food, or when their space is invaded). “Getting to Know Us” gives additional information, and invites children to try an animal activity, such as slithering on their bellies like snakes.

Preschool and primary teachers, librarians, and parents will appreciate this resource for teaching kids about the animals found in our zoos. These projects encourage creativity with a purpose.

Tracy Fitzwater