**Student Worksheet: Organism Observations**

**Directions**: Follow the prompts in the “Be an animal scientist” section. Then, answer the questions in the second section as directed by your teacher. Read the *Science News* article “[By fluttering its wings, this bird uses body language to tell its mate ‘after you’](https://www.sciencenews.org/article/fluttering-wings-bird-body-language)” and answer the questions in the third section (“What can we learn?).

**Be an animal scientist**

1. Find a 24-hour live feed from a zoo or aquarium or a feed that broadcasts throughout most of your day. Choose an animal to observe. Create a plan for how you will record your observations. There are a variety of ways scientists record animal behaviors, from listing behaviors and tallying their frequencies to writing down each behavior along with the time it occurred. Describe how you plan to record your observations and identify the information that you will be tracking.

2. Watch the live feed at least for at least 15 minutes twice a day on three consecutive days, taking notes about your observations. What is the animal doing? What do you notice about its body language? Record what times you make your observations.

3. Once you have completed your observations, look for any patterns in the animal’s behavior. Summarize these behaviors and patterns in a bulleted list. Include as much detail as possible to describe these behaviors, including the environment in which the behaviors occurred. Keep your summaries as objective as possible. Try to record facts only and keep any assumptions about the animal from influencing your observations.

**Reflect on your observations**

1. Why is it important to make your observations at the same times every day?

2. Why is it important to keep an observation objective when it comes to animal behaviors? What could happen if you began to make assumptions about the reason behind the animal’s behavior?

3. What information regarding animal behaviors are you not able to collect using video footage?

4. Did you face any other challenges in observing animal behavior on live streams? If so, what were they?

5. What do you think you would be able to learn by watching the animal for a longer period of time?

6. How might your data differ from a behaviorist observing your identified animal in its natural habitat?

7. What challenges might a behaviorist experience when collecting data in the field?

**What can we learn?**

1. Read the *Science News* article “[By fluttering its wings, this bird uses body language to tell its mate ‘after you’](https://www.sciencenews.org/article/fluttering-wings-bird-body-language).” What are some similarities and differences between the scientists’ study and yours? How did the scientists make their discoveries?

2. Look back at the patterns of behavior you identified in the first section. Are there any behaviors you noticed that you would be interested in learning more about? Before making any conclusions about the reasons behind the animal behaviors, what additional data would you need to collect?

3. What can we learn about animal behavior using observations? Are there limits to what we can learn? Why or why not?