

Reading a Natural History Specimen

What can you learn from an animal that has been preserved? Use the questions in the left column as a guide in making observations, inferences, and deductions as Zion National Park researchers do when studying natural history specimens. Record your findings in the right column.

Presentation, Properties, and Features of a Specimen	Observations, Inferences, and Deductions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe any labels or text found with the specimen. • After studying the label or text, what specific background information is shared about the history of the specimen? • Does the appearance of the specimen give clues as to how it was collected and preserved? Explain. • What purpose does the specimen serve in the collection based upon its appearance? (public education exhibit, research, artistic, etc.) • Is the specimen in good, fair, or poor condition? • What general kind of animal is it? What species? • Carefully examine individual body parts and describe characteristics of each. (skin, fur, feathers, head, teeth, ears, feet, body shape, etc.) • What do you think it feels like when touched? • Is it a carnivore, herbivore, or omnivore? • How do you think the colors of the body are beneficial to survival? • Is it female or male? • How long is it? How tall is it? How much do you think it weighs when alive? • What stage of its lifecycle was it in when it died? 	