What do Zoos do with Doo?

Poop. Feces. Scat. Guano. No matter what word you use for it, poop is poop. It may not be the first thing you think of when you visit the zoo, but rest assured it’s high on your kids’ lists.

Poop may be gross and smelly, but poop tells stories. Animals use it to communicate and build homes, and it can tell us what an animal has eaten, the animal’s age, and if it’s male or female.


For instance, did you know that tigers leave their droppings in piles called scrapes to mark their territory? Or that storks poop on their legs to cool off? Or that squid-eating penguins have pink poop?

Written for children ages 8 to 12, *Who Pooped in the Zoo?* explores animal poop as a way of understanding the behavior of zoo animals, from sloths to spiny echidnas, giant pandas to guanacos.

After a general explanation of the facts and functions of feces, the book discusses how animals use poop to define territory, establish status, find mates, and keep in touch with the rest of the herd.

“I think the most fun part of the book is how the grossest thing an animal does leads to some of the most interesting aspects of animal behavior,” says Patterson.

“For example, I always tell the story about the elephant that ate the ladies’ purse, credit card, keys and all,” Patterson explains. “She could replace everything but the keys. And guess how long they had to wait for the keys to come out? Twenty-four hours! That little story tells you everything about what elephants will eat, how long it takes them to digest and what they won’t digest.”

The book also touches on the new bio-gas technologies that allow zoos to convert animal waste into electricity to power and heat the zoos.

*Who Pooped in the Zoo?* is available at local bookstores and gift shops, through online retailers, or from Farcountry Press at 1.800.821.3874, www.farcountrypress.com.
About the Author

Caroline Patterson has written for Seventeen, Sunset, Via, and Outside magazines. She was a 1990-1992 Stegner Fellow at Stanford University and recently edited Montana Women Writers: A Geography of the Heart, winner of the 2007 Willa Award.

About the Illustrator

Robert Rath is a book designer and illustrator living in Bozeman. Although he has worked with Scholastic Books, Lucasfilm, and Montana State University, his favorite project is keeping up with his family.

About Farcountry Press

Celebrating its 31st year in 2011, award-winning publisher Farcountry Press specializes in photography books, children’s series, and regional history titles nationwide.

www.farcountrypress.com, 800.821.3874

To schedule an interview or to receive a press kit (cover image, interior photos, review copy), contact Linda Netschert, 406.422.1260, linda.netschert@farcountrypress.com.

Take a Peek Inside

The word “poop” is a Middle English word meaning “search” or “defecate.” The first time the word occurs in literature is in the early 1600s. It is likely that the word started as a verb and then became a noun. As a verb, “to poop” is a way of saying that someone has used the restroom. As a noun, “poop” means the body’s waste material.