

Creature feature

BY KAREN VITT / SPECIAL TO THE OREGONIAN and PHOTOS BY TIM LaBARGE / THE OREGONIAN

Work the beauty of the wild into your wardrobe

Fashion has drawn inspiration from the animal kingdom since cave dwellers first donned mammoth skins and poked saber-toothed tiger bones through their noses.

Today, our culture may be more civilized (well, at least a little), but when it comes to style, we won't abandon the wild. After all, wearing animal prints, leather or feathers can make dressing as unpredictable and fun as life itself.

"Animals are beautiful, mysterious and exotic, as many of us would like to be," says Linda D'Ae-Smith, a spokeswoman for the Oregon Zoo. "Mimicking their 'attire' is a way to feel like that."



Horn necklace
\$108

At Elizabeth Street

Spotted on one local shopping safari were leopard-print shoes, a monkey motif bag and many of the same creatures you'd expect to see on any wildlife adventure.

"The most common throughout the ages are leopard and zebra, followed by varying kinds of snakes," says Dervish designer Jasmine Patten of Dragonlily Boutique. "They are most common because they are easy to recognize, and the contrast of colors and textures is beautiful."

Flirty feathers and fur (both real and faux), like a marabou wrap or mukluk

boots, are another playful way to work the beauty of the wild into your wardrobe.

"The patterns and colors found in nature are timeless," Patten says. "The way they look is striking and must appeal to some sense that wants to connect with the natural world."

But are there any creatures not suited to style? "Opossums," Patten says. "Pink tails, anyone? The feel and look of the animal is important. Who wants to wear a hyena coat or a weasel scarf?"



Candice Nicole leopard-print bag
\$295
At Cheeky B

tips

Want to stand out from the fashion herd? Jasmine Patten, co-owner of Dragonlily Boutique, shares her secrets of animal attraction.

Animal prints: "It's important to do animal prints in a good-quality fabric, whether it's velvet, faux fur or chiffon. Nothing looks cheesier than a badly printed, cheap fabric. But when the fabric is luxe and the print is well-rendered, it's a very upscale look."

"Wearing animal prints should be done with care — only one print at a time. Many of them go with black. They can be dressed up with a flirty skirt and heels, or made more casual with jeans and boots. A leopard coat is actually pretty versatile if your bottoms tend to be black, brown or jeans. Try putting some color with zebra. Red makes a statement, while pink softens it and adds a whimsical touch."

Embossed snake and mock croc: "These tend to have a sleek look about them, so go for a clean and simple style when wearing these. They can be mixed with other textures, like a soft, fuzzy sweater."

Shearling and fur: "Faux fur is definitely the only thing I will buy," Patten says. "There are so many great fabrics these days, there is no need for real fur. Faux-fur jackets in colors will make you smile, and be warm in the winter. Faux-fur scarves will soften your face."

Feathers: "When doing feathers, just go for it. Feathers can be both very warm and very fun! Nothing says 'play' like a boa or marabou jacket. Wear a boa to a party and see how much fun you will have! They add instant glamour to any look and give you that certain *je ne sais quoi*."



Dervish leopard-print dress \$195 At Dragonlily / Horn earrings \$79 At Elizabeth Street
Anne Klein New York strappy satin heels \$225, Carlo Fellini pink satin clutch purse \$128 Both at Nordstrom
Feather capelet \$24.99 At Marshalls