

Winter Effects on Animals

Animals and birds must act differently during the winter in order to survive. People stay inside, wear warm clothes, turn on heat and tend to eat warm food. But what do animals do? Some animals hibernate, or sleep, while other animals go to warmer areas in the winter. When an animal goes to a warmer place it is called migration. Finally, other animals adapt to survive the snow and cold temperatures.

If animals migrate, they do so before winter. This means they travel to other places where the winter is warmer and they can find food to eat. Some birds, but not all, migrate south. Other animals migrate including some bats, caribou, elk, and whales. Some fish and insects migrate as well.

Some animals hibernate for part or all of the winter. Animals that hibernate go into a very deep sleep. The animal's body temperature drops, and its heartbeat and breathing slow down. It uses very little energy. Animals hibernate to save their energy and don't need to eat. Animals prepare for hibernation in the fall by eating extra food and storing it as body fat. They use this fat for energy while hibernating. Some animals also store food such as nuts or acorns to eat later in the winter. Some squirrels and mice hibernate. Bears are "nappers" as they wake up to move around little but not to eat. Raccoons and skunks are nap and eat snacks. They store food and hibernate, but wake up to eat snacks.

Many animals remain and stay active in the winter and adapt to the changing weather. The animals make changes in their behavior or bodies. To keep warm, they may grow thicker fur. Some rabbits fur changes to white so they can blend in with the snow. Many animals prepare for the winter by storing up food to eat later. Other animals like rabbits and deer, spend winter looking for bark, leaves, moss, and twigs. Some animals eat different kinds of food as the seasons change. The red fox eats fruit and insects in the other three seasons, but eats small rodents in the winter. Animals find shelter in holes in trees or logs, under rocks or leaves, underground, or in caves and dens.

An animal that stays active during the winter leaves tracks when there is snow on the ground or when the ground is soft. It is possible to tell what animal left the tracks because their tracks are unique, or different. An animal track is a mark left by a moving animal. You can find the path, route, or course of the animal by examining its track. Tracking is a technique that scientists and hunters use to find and follow animals.

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Directions: After reading *Winter's Effect on Animals*, answer the following questions.

1. What is the main idea of this article?
 - a. In winter, animals must migrate, hibernate, or adapt.
 - b. Some animals that hibernate just nap.
 - c. Signs of animals in the winter include tracks.
2. List three animals that hibernate?

3. The following animals migrate:
 - a. bats, caribou and whales
 - b. bats, squirrels and elk
 - c. caribou, deer, and elk
4. Animals that migrate do so before winter. True or False?
5. List at least three places animals find shelter

6. How do animals prepare for hibernation?
 - a. They go south before winter.
 - b. They remain active and grow thicker fur.
 - c. They eat extra food and store it as body fat.
7. If you were an animal, would you want to migrate, hibernate or adapt? Write at least a paragraph telling why.

Extending Activity:

Use a research source to learn more about one of the following:

- Animals that migrate.
- Animals that hibernate.
- Animals that adapt.