



VERMONT INSTITUTE OF NATURAL SCIENCE
2723 Church Hill Rd., Woodstock, VT 05091 (802) 457-2779

ANIMALS IN WINTER – Habitats – SLIDE SHOW SCRIPT (Grades 3-6)

This slide show is intended to be used as a review at the end of the workshop—with questions aimed at prompting discussion.

1. WINTER SCENE

Winter can be a very difficult time for animals. Why? (*possible answers: hard to find food and water, to get around, and to stay warm*) Where might animals find shelter from the wind and cold in this picture? (*low tree boughs, below snow*) What are some possible foods for animals in this picture? (*cones, buds, twigs*) Animals cope with the hardships of winter in a variety of ways.

2. RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD

This animal feeds mostly on insects, and we don't see many of those flying around in the winter! During late summer, red-winged blackbirds and many other species of birds move south. Can you think of other animals that migrate long distances? (*many birds, monarch butterflies, some caribou, whales, bats, fish, people, etc.*)

3. AMERICAN TOAD

This animal also feeds on insects, but it can't fly south! Where might a toad spend the winter? (*this toad digs its way into the soil to spend the winter.*)

4. GARTER SNAKE

Like the toad, this “cold-blooded” snake cannot remain warm enough in winter to stay active. Snakes spend the winter huddled together in small caverns or crevices in rocks. What are some other overwintering strategies for amphibians and reptiles? (*burrowing under soil or mud, freezing solid under leaf litter, staying active in or over iced pond*)

5. BAT

Hanging by its feet in the shelter of a not-so-cold cave, this bat is hibernating through the winter. In the fall, some kinds of bats find a protected shelter where they, hopefully, won't be disturbed until spring. What other animals hibernate? (*jumping mice, ground squirrel, woodchucks, bears*)

6. WOODCHUCK

When the woodchuck settles down in its burrow for the winter, its heart rate drops from 160 beats per minute to only about 4 per minute. What other physical changes do hibernating animals undergo? (*breathing slows, body temperature drops*)

7. RACCOON

How does the raccoon spend its winter? (*raccoons seek shelter and may sleep for a week or two, but stir to find food when the weather permits.*) Can you name other animals that are dormant in the winter? (*chipmunks, skunks*)

8. TREE WITH SQUIRREL NEST
Many animals remain relatively active throughout the winter by storing plenty of food and finding appropriate shelter for the coldest of days. In the top branches of this tree is the leafy summer home of a gray squirrel. During the winter, gray squirrels more often nest inside of tree holes. There they store food that they use through the winter. How many animals can you think of that remain active through the winter? (*moose, deer, beavers, some birds, bobcats, foxes, coyotes, hares, squirrels, mice*)
9. BEAVER POND
There's a special shelter here in this dammed-up stream. Inside the lodge, there could be two or as many as ten beavers. Beavers remain active throughout the winter, eating food they've stored under the water and snuggling close together on very cold nights. By sharing their warmth, the temperature inside is spring-like when the air outside is below zero!
10. BEE ON FLOWER
Bees also remain active during the winter, but we don't see them flying around. Instead, the bees huddle together in their hive, feeding on flower pollen and honey made from nectar. By using their stored food and constantly beating their wings, the honeybees keep the whole colony warm. What other insects have you observed in the winter? (*flies, ladybugs, silverfish . . .*)
11. WOOLLY BEAR
Insects go through the winter in many forms: as eggs, as larvae – like this woolly bear caterpillar, as pupae, and as adults. On warmer winter days, you might see a woolly bear slowly making its way across the snow!
12. TREE WITH CAVITIES
This hole was made by a hungry woodpecker. Since ants and beetle larvae are hidden inside trees through the winter, the pileated and other woodpeckers do not need to migrate to remain active and well-fed all winter.
13. TRACKS IN SNOW
Here's a mystery in the snow – during the night an animal passed by. Even though we may not see many animals in winter, an observant eye can find signs of their activity. What might this animal have been searching for on a cold, winter night? (*perhaps food, shelter, or a mate*)
14. PEOPLE
Winter presents its challenges: finding food and water, getting around, and staying warm. Like other animals, people have to adapt to winter, too. Some people migrate south, but most of us find other ways to stay warm and active through the cold months. What is your favorite way to get warm in the winter?