



How to...



COLOR CHANGE

Snowshoe hares swap their color each autumn from brown to white to match winter snow and stay safe from predators.

Enjoy wildlife in winter

Head outside to explore how animals adapt to the chilly season.

Winter is a perfect time to go outdoors to spot wildlife and see how they survive the chilly season. Bundle up in warm layers, and have an adult join you on your adventure.

Go birding

Birding is the act of appreciating and observing birds, and you can try it in your neighborhood or local park. Leafless tree branches in winter make it easy to spot birds that don't migrate to warmer regions. You might see a red cardinal fluffing its feathers, a mechanism that keeps it warm. You may also find raptors and their large stick nests among tree branches or forks. Owls may perch in treetops at dusk at the edge of an open field, where they can swoop down on small rodents for a quick meal. Visit open-water habitats, like a lake, pond, or river, where you may see waterfowl like ducks, geese, or pelicans huddling in groups to stay warm.

Explore animal tracks

Identifying animal tracks is easier in winter when there is fresh snow or mud on the ground. Deer leave a trail of cloven (two-part) hoof prints that resemble an

upside-down heart shape. Canines like foxes, coyotes, and dogs often leave claw marks (a total of four per print), while raccoons leave their handprints. The tracks of rabbits are some of the easiest to identify in the snow. They leave four prints with each hop, forming a Y shape with two big hind prints and two small front prints.

Give them shelter

You can help create homes for small mammals, birds, and insects in winter. Fill outdoor pots with straw, moss, and leaves and tuck them in the corners of a garden for creatures to seek shelter. Instead of clearing away the last of your autumn leaves, rake them into a pile. It makes the perfect hiding spot for hibernating toads or pollinators like ladybugs and butterflies.

Visit a nature center

Nature centers can teach you how local wildlife adapts to surroundings seasonally. For example, you might learn how a wood frog can freeze completely solid in the winter before thawing in the spring. During guided "night" walks on flat trails on late afternoons, you might hear the sounds of foxes, bats, frogs, and owls.



Spot deer tracks in the snow.

Dog tips for the cold



Take these steps to keep your pet warm and safe in snow and ice.

Protect paws Before a walk, you can put booties on your dog's paws or apply paw balm to shield them from chemical salts used to de-ice walkways.

Bundle up Talk to a parent about whether your pup needs a sweater. It can keep your pup more comfortable, especially if you have a small dog or one with a belly that is close to the ground.

Keep them occupied Your dog may be spending more time indoors in winter. You can help your pet stay active, such as with a game of hide-and-seek, or playing fetch with a soft toy.