



OHS YOUTH NEWSLETTER

By, For, and About Youth & Animal Welfare
Ohlone Humane Society Youth & Family



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Winter Wildlife: How Animals Survive the Cold Season

by Makayla A, 16 years

Winter brings unique challenges to wildlife, and animals adapt in incredible ways to endure the colder temperatures and scarcity of food. Each species has developed its own survival strategies, from migration to hibernation and beyond. Let's take a look at how wildlife manages the winter months.

Hibernation: Sleeping Through Winter

Many animals enter a state of hibernation, conserving energy when food sources are low. Hibernation involves slowing down body functions like metabolism, heart rate, and breathing, allowing animals to survive off stored body fat. Examples of hibernators include:

- **Bears:** While not true hibernators, bears enter a lighter form of hibernation called torpor, lowering their body temperature and living off fat reserves. They even give birth during this period.
- **Ground Squirrels:** These small mammals experience deep hibernation, dropping their body temperature to match their surroundings, and waking periodically to eat stored food.
- **Bats:** Many bat species hibernate in caves, sheltering from the cold and using fat reserves to sustain themselves through the winter.

Migration: The Great Escape

Migration is another popular winter survival strategy, especially for birds. Many species travel south in search of warmer climates and abundant food supplies. For example:

- **Monarch Butterflies:** Known for their spectacular migration, millions of monarchs fly thousands of miles from Canada and the U.S. to reach warmer winter habitats in Mexico.
- **Arctic Terns:** These birds hold the record for longest migration, flying from the Arctic to the Antarctic to enjoy endless summer.
- **Waterfowl:** Ducks, geese, and swans migrate to find open waters and food sources, often gathering in flocks to travel great distances.

Adapting to the Cold: Toughing It Out

Not all animals migrate or hibernate. Some adapt their behavior and physiology to survive winter conditions right where they are:

- **Deer and Elk:** Deer grow thicker winter coats and reduce their activity to conserve energy, relying on fat reserves and foraging for twigs, bark, and remaining vegetation.
- **Foxes and Coyotes:** These predators stay active year-round, relying on keen hunting skills and a dense winter coat for warmth. They'll hunt for small mammals and scavenge when food is scarce.
- **Snowshoe Hares:** Equipped with wide, furry feet that act as snowshoes, these hares change their fur color to white in winter, blending into snowy landscapes to avoid predators.

Storing Food: Preparing in Advance

Some animals, like squirrels and beavers, stockpile food in the fall to prepare for winter:

- **Squirrels:** Many species of squirrels gather nuts, seeds, and other foods, storing them in hidden caches or burrows to eat during winter. They have an excellent memory for where they've buried food.
- **Beavers:** Beavers create underwater food caches by storing branches and logs near their lodges. This allows them to access food without leaving the safety of their shelter, even when waters freeze.

Adapting Homes for Warmth

To stay warm, many animals prepare or adapt their homes for the winter:

- **Birds:** Some birds fluff up their feathers and seek warm places, like tree hollows or dense shrubs. Smaller birds may even huddle together in groups to share body heat.
- **Insects:** Many insects, like ants and ladybugs, burrow into the ground or gather in sheltered places to survive the cold. Some insects produce a natural antifreeze, which keeps their bodies from freezing in sub-zero temperatures.

Climate Change and Wildlife in Winter

With fluctuating winter temperatures and less predictable weather, wildlife faces new challenges. Milder winters can disrupt hibernation cycles, alter migration patterns, and affect food sources. As habitats change, animals are finding themselves forced to adapt to shifting seasonal patterns in unexpected ways.

Winter is a time of resilience and adaptation in nature. Whether through hibernation, migration, or staying active, each species has its own remarkable methods of facing the season's unique hardships. By observing and understanding these adaptations, we gain a greater appreciation for the incredible survival strategies wildlife has developed over thousands of years



Animal News & Community Service Opportunity Ideas at Other Organizations

This information is shared for your convenience only, and we do not endorse or take responsibility for the event.

December 14, 2024 City of Fremont Community Services Garden Volunteering.

The following events are listed through Eventbrite.com and you must sign up through their website if offering to volunteer. These events ARE NOT ASSOCIATED WITH OHS.

December 8, 12, 30: 49er Event Bike Parking

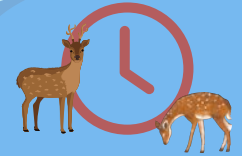
December 8: Habitat Restoration Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National

Wildlife Refuge Environmental Education Center at Alviso

December 1 & 14: Trash Clean Up at Coyote Creek, San Jose



What is Daylight Saving Time and Why Do We Use It? by Makayla A.



How Daylight Savings Time Affects Animals

When we shift clocks for Daylight Savings Time (DST), animals feel the impact, even if they don't follow a clock like we do. Animals rely on natural light cues for feeding, sleeping, and migrating, and DST can disrupt these rhythms.

- **Farm Animals:** Farm animals like cows are especially affected, as dairy cows are used to consistent milking schedules. An abrupt time shift can temporarily reduce milk production until they adjust.
- **Pets:** Household pets are sensitive to feeding and walking times. After the clock changes, they may still expect food or attention at their usual times. Gradually adjusting routines over a few days can help ease their transition.
- **Wildlife:** Wildlife, especially migratory birds, respond to daylight cues rather than clocks. However, the change in human activity patterns can disturb their routines, and nocturnal animals are at higher risk of vehicle accidents during altered commuting times.

By being mindful and easing animals into new schedules, we can make the transition to DST smoother for all creatures, big and small.



Interested in writing an article or sharing original animal art for the OHS Youth Newsletter?
Tell us your thoughts on animal issues.

Draw a picture or take an original photo of an community animal in its local habitat.
Share an original nature poem.

Contact youth@ohlonehumaneociety.org for more info about community service hours for participation in the newsletter.

