

## Snug as a Bug

### Activity: Winter Nature Scavenger Hunt

Animals will exhibit three different behaviors that will allow them to survive the cold winter months. An animal may migrate in the fall, which means they move south to where it is warmer and there is more food available. Other animals may hibernate, which means they basically sleep the whole winter. They put on extra body fat that helps them survive months without eating. The last way to survive the winter is to stay active and find food to eat.

Take a walk either at Spring Creek Prairie, Rowe Sanctuary, or a local park and keep an eye out for some of these winter signs of animal and plant life.

- Animal tracks- Many animals are active, even in the winter. The best places to find tracks is in snow or mud. There are some track guides included in our set of links, one with a track checklist and track patterns page, and another with a full list of big tracks to help you identify which animal left the tracks!
- Animal scat- Everyone, including all animals, poop. Scat is the scientific term we use to refer to poop, and finding it is a great way to know if an animal has been there. You can find scat guides online, but if you find some – look at it close (don't touch) and write in your journal what you see. What was the animal eating? Which animal do you think left it there? What makes you think that?
- Bird nest- Birds only nest in the spring and summer so the winter is a good time to search for empty bird nests. If you can see it up close, what materials did the bird use to create their nest? How big of a bird do you think used it? What shape is the nest?
- Lichen on a log or rock- Many people confuse lichen with moss. They both can be found growing in similar places, but are different organisms. Lichen is actually fungus that has an algae that grows within it where moss is a primitive plant. This website breaks it down simply if you want to read more about lichen vs. moss <https://ourjourneywestward.com/lichen-vs-moss/>.
- Evidence of tunnels- Many small animals burrow, or create tunnels, underground which help them keep warm in the winter. You can find tunnels because the dirt is disturbed above ground or there is a bump under the dirt or snow.
- Food resource for an animal- Since some animals stay active in the winter, they need a food resource to help them survive. Can you find something an animal would eat? Some examples of what you may find are seeds, berries, or other animals.

