

February - Week 1

*Asleep for the winter:
Who's hibernating?*

Many people wonder how long winter will last as Groundhog Day arrives on February 2 each year. How exactly do animals like the groundhog, also known as a woodchuck, survive through the cold winter? Part of the groundhog's survival strategy is to lower their body temperature to around 40 degrees while hibernating, which is much lower than their normal temperature of 100 degrees. Other Minnesota animals (including mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and some insects) adapt to winter by becoming inactive, living in burrows, and lowering their body temperatures.

Observe your natural surroundings this week. Take a step outside or go for a walk. Look and listen for animals and animal signs. Which animals are absent? Think about the animals that are not active, but may be hibernating in or around your neighborhood, a local park, wetland, or forest.

After your outdoor observation, write a narrative that describes how a groundhog, or other hibernating animal, prepared for their "long winter's nap" or what they may be "dreaming about" during this week in mid-winter. Add a sketch of the animal to your journal page if you'd like, possibly including the location the animal may be hibernating.



Many animals that hibernate insulate their nest as well as growing a thicker coat.