NATUREKIDS NB

Overwintering



You may have noticed the air getting colder lately, brrrrr! The nature around us is noticing this too. It's not winter just yet, but many species have some preparation to do before the coldest time of year arrives. For example, this snowshoe hare is starting to turn white, an adaptation that helps her stay safely camouflaged when it snows. Check out the activities below to learn about how nature prepares for and spends the wintertime!

HIBERNATE, INSULATE, MIGRATE

This game will introduce you to a variety of overwintering strategies used by species in New Brunswick. Plants and animals adapt to the cold in three main ways: by sleeping it away (hibernate), by building up resources to keep themselves warm (insulate), or by fleeing to a warmer environment (migrate). Choose three areas spread around your space, one to represent hibernate, another for insulate, and the last for migrate. Gather in the middle of the space and have the group leader read one of the included clues, then run to the area you think matches the overwintering strategy used by that creature. Try to guess which species the clue is about before your leader reveals the answers. See how many New Brunswick species your group can correctly identify and match to their adaptation style!





CRAFTING OVERWINTERING HABITATS

Pick a species you learned about during the hibernate, insulate, migrate game, or any of your favourite New Brunswick creatures, and make an artistic representation of them preparing for overwintering in their habitat. Use any craft materials and remember to include some of the adaptations your species has for overwintering. For example, you could draw a black bear catching fish to fatten up, with a cozy den waiting in the background!

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SHARING WINTER SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

Many people struggle to enjoy the winter, but there is much to appreciate about this season. It is important to remember that humans are animals too, and we can also slow down and embrace the changes in our routines throughout the colder months.

Use the post-it notes provided to have a group brainstorm session about your favourite strategies for surviving (and thriving!) during the winter. Include only one idea per post-it, and see if everyone can write at least one note, then keep going if there are more left. Put all the notes up on display so the whole group can see each other's contributions and stack the notes that have the same ideas on them. Discuss what you have in common and what are some of the more unique ideas that came up; which ones are everyone most excited to try?

Group the post-its based on the concepts of migration, insulation, and hibernation. Think of migration as actions that require you to move to warm up, such as skating, tobogganing, or snowshoeing. Think of insulation as activities that help you feel extra cozy, like drinking hot chocolate, wearing wool socks, or sitting by a fire. Think of hibernation as ideas that involve taking a break and resting, such as reading a book, watching the snow fall, or curling up for a nap. Try to reach an agreement on which ideas go in which group, maybe some could belong in more than one! Discuss which type of adaptations you're each most drawn to, migration, insulation, hibernation, or some combination of the three? If you weren't a human, which New Brunswick species would you most like to be based on its approach to overwintering?

Consider leaving the notes up throughout the winter as a reminder to try each other's overwintering strategies and make the most of the season together!



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Overwintering Clues

1. During the summer and fall, I eat as much as possible to double my weight and build up enough fat reserves to find a den and sleep through the winter. (Black Bear - Hibernate)

2. I flap my wings all the way to Mexico every year. No other insect flies as far as I do! (Monarch Butterfly - Migrate)

3. My name comes from my large, fluffy feet, which prevent me from sinking into the snow. (Snowshoe Hare - Insulate)

4. I might look like I'm dead but I'm just resting so that I can grow more berries next year! (Blueberry - Hibernate)

5. My favorite food is nectar. In cold regions, nectar is almost impossible to find, so I fly south every winter where there are flowers to eat. (Ruby-throated Hummingbird - Migrate)

6. I find somewhere like a cave that stays just warm enough to keep my body from freezing. Sometimes up to thousands of us curl up together for the winter! (Garter Snake - Hibernate)

7. I don't like to make my own winter den, so I usually sleep in old groundhog holes or even under human porches and patios. Make sure you don't scare me awake! (Skunk - Hibernate)

8. My thick bark acts like a winter coat and a special coating on my needles helps protect them from the cold weather. (Eastern White Pine - Insulate)

9. I swim many thousands of kilometers south for the winter, the warmer water there is perfect for taking care of a new baby. (Humpback whale - Migrate)

10. My shell isn't enough protection from the elements, I stay at the bottom of a river all winter long where the current prevents it from completely freezing. (Wood Turtle - Hibernate)

11. Winter is no problem for me, because my feathers keep me warm and my sharp ears allow me to detect prey even under the snow! (Barred Owl - Insulate)

12. I have a thick winter coat that keeps me comfortable. I also like to find places that are more sheltered from the wind in winter, such as a nice pine forest. (White-tailed Deer - Insulate)

13. I flee the cold at night and fly off to hang out in warmer roosting sites every year. (Eastern Red Bat - Migrate)

14. I have needles but they turn yellow and fall off during the fall to help me save energy and slow my growth during the winter. (Tamarack - Hibernate)

15. It's hard to find nuts and seeds in the snow, so I scurry around collecting them during the fall to build up enough to keep myself full during the winter. (Grey Squirrel - Insulate)