

ANIMALS in WINTER

What do animals do in winter? Where do they go? What do they eat? How do they live in the cold? Different animals do a variety of things in winter to help them get through the long, cold months of winter...they need to protect themselves in order to survive. Animals are born knowing what to do and when to do it. That's called instinct. Take some time to talk about different animals and how they spend their winters. Then set up a fun and informative "Animals in Winter" center in your classroom. Fill it with books, fact and fiction, to help children understand how different animals survive the cold weather. Provide supplies so that kids can create rubbings of animal tracks, make writing paper available for writing about the winter habits of animals, have reproducibles on hand to make the squirrel and her warm winter nest or the Winter Peek-A-Boo sheet, and have the materials ready to make the Animal Fact Wheel that will give answers to many animal questions. Invite children to visit the center to learn about animals in winter and encourage them to share the information with others!

Migrators

When winter arrives, some animals migrate to warmer climates. They travel south where it's warmer in order to find the food and shelter they need. In the spring they return to the north again. This round-trip journey is called *migration*. Most birds migrate. After feeding and raising their families all summer, they start to gather into flocks in the fall and then, one day, they're gone. Monarch but-



terflies are among the smallest animals to migrate. Hundreds of thousands fly south each year. What a beautiful sight! Some large animals such as moose and elk also migrate. Even some fish (tuna, herring, smelt) use migration as a way to survive the winter.

Adaptors

Many animals are able to stay in the same area during the winter. They do this by adapting to their surroundings. Squirrels and beavers store food for winter, deer and foxes grow fluffier, warmer coats and other animals, such as the snowshoe rabbit and weasel, change color

so that they cannot be seen in the snow. Many animals move their homes to cozier places, line their nests with leaves and grasses, or dig deeper into the ground below the frost line. We humans are adaptors too...we heat our buildings and wear warmer clothing.

Hibernators

Some animals get through the cold winter by taking a long nap, hibernating for three or four months when food is scarce. The hearts of these animals beat only a few times per minute, their breathing is much slower, and their body temperatures go way down. The animals

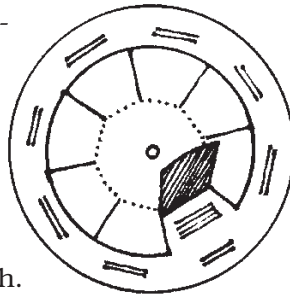
do not eat and their stored body fat keeps them warm. These animals that are very relaxed cannot be awakened easily and they seem more dead than alive. Then when the weather begins to get warm again, the animals wake up. Some animals that hibernate are the dormouse, earthworm, slug, snail, ladybug, frog, toad, and ground squirrel. Other animals sleep through much of the winter, but their bodily functions remain normal. They often curl up to stay cozy and wake up to eat when the weather warms up a little bit during the winter. The animals that do this are the woodchuck, brown bat, jumping mouse, bear, chipmunk, skunk, and raccoon. Kids might like to try this experiment to understand how animals curl up their bodies to stay warm. Ask each child to hold one hand in a fist and the other open for one minute. Then have them place both hands to their cheeks. The hand that was held in a fist is warmer because they were holding in their body heat. Children will discover why animals are warmer when they're snuggled into a cozy ball.

Winter Peek-A-Boo

Use the winter peek-a-boo pages to demonstrate where and how animals might spend the winter months. Kids lift the "windows" to discover rabbits huddled together, squirrels nibbling acorns in their tree home, a brown bear hibernating in a cave beneath the snow, etc. Reproduce both pages. Cut along the solid "window" lines on the top page and fold back the windows on the dotted lines. Glue the top page over the bottom page, being careful not to get glue on the back of the windows or on the animals. Read the poem as you open the windows to reveal the animals in their winter homes.

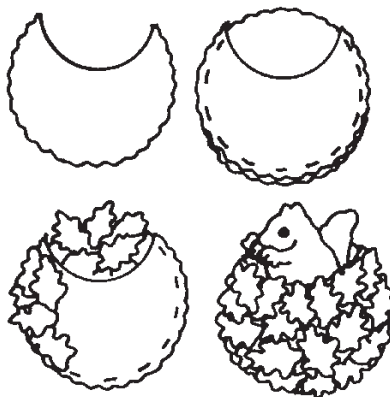
Animals in Winter Fact Wheel

Use the reproducible fact wheel to teach kids about the winter habits of many animals. Children simply turn the wheel to match the animal's name with its picture, and then lift the flap to read the fact. Reproduce the wheels for each child on tagboard or heavy paper. Have them cut out both wheels and cut on the solid lines between animal pictures, so that the picture flaps may be lifted to reveal the fact underneath. Fold on the dotted lines. Fasten the two fact wheels together by poking a paper fastener through the middle of both wheels.



Home for a Squirrel

Help kids create a typical home for a squirrel with the patterns on page 7. Duplicate the squirrel pattern on gray or light brown paper or manila tagboard. If you use tagboard, color the squirrel. Trace the leaf pattern on various colors of paper—fall colors! Provide each student with two paper plates. Cut a "U" shape out of one plate, as shown, and then staple the two plates together around

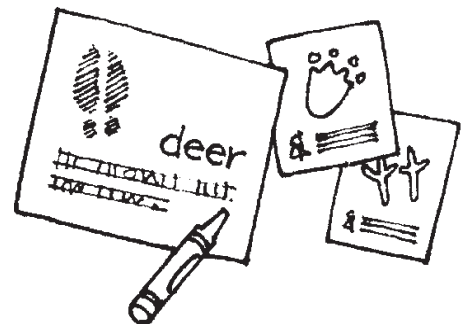


the edge, leaving the "U" open for inserting the squirrel. Next, glue all the colored leaves on the paper plate—inside and out—until you have a typical squirrel's nest. Then write the following poem on the back of the nest.

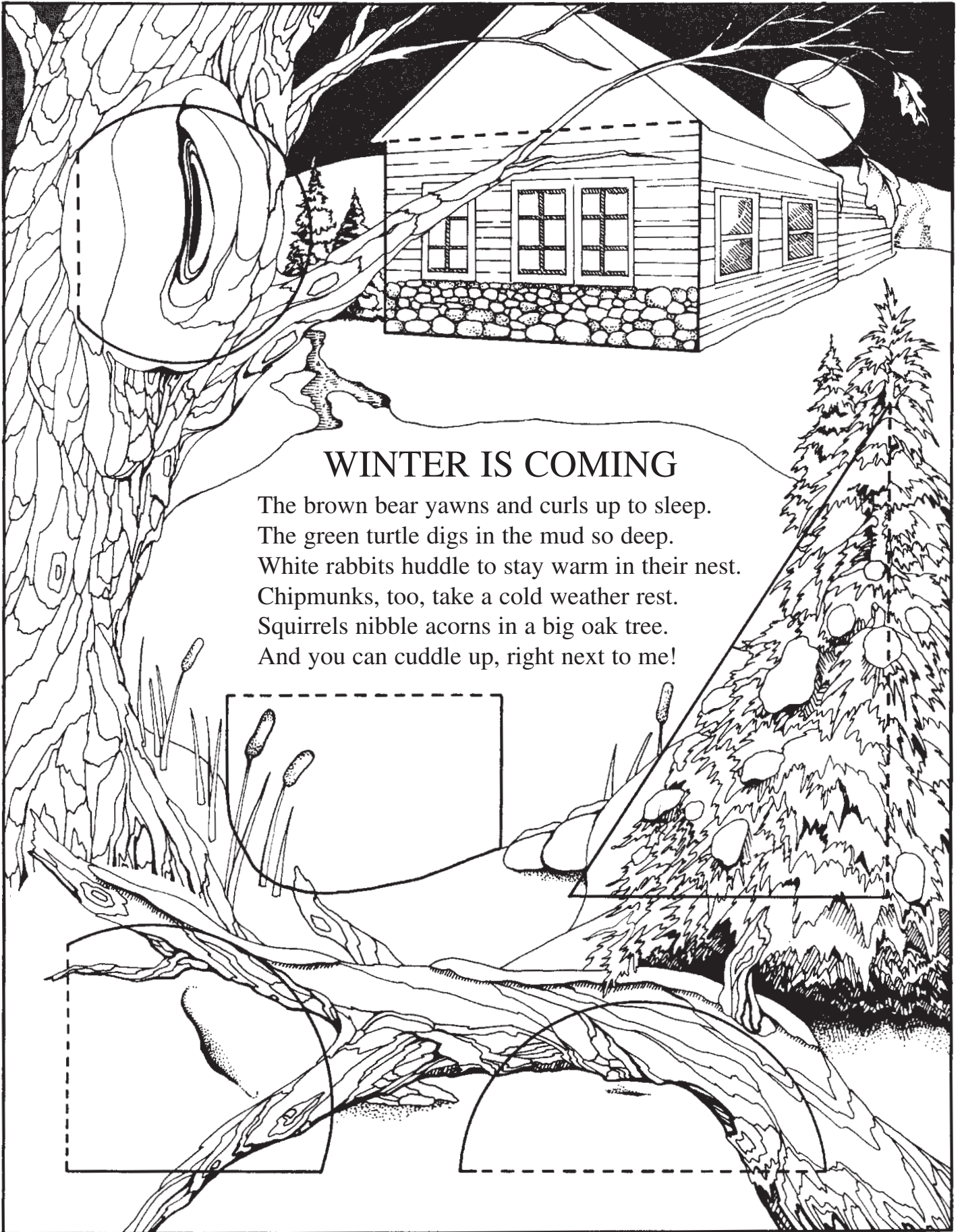
*High up in an old oak tree,
Safe and cozy as can be,
Little squirrel quietly rests
In his warm and leafy nest.*

Animal Track Rubbing Cards

It may take some time to create these nifty rubbing cards, but you'll need just one set for the whole class and it's worth the effort. Make two copies of the cards—one on tagboard and one on regular copy paper. Using the paper copy as a pattern, cut the track shapes out of heavy black construction paper and then use thin rubber cement to glue the track shapes to the tagboard cards. This creates a raised track pattern.



Laminate the individual cards for extended use. The idea is to place a sheet of paper over the card and rub the edge of a dark-colored crayon over the track areas, creating an imprint. Place the track cards in a center or use them in a language activity. Have the kids create one track per page and then write a short sentence about the animal. Or reproduce a set of rubbing cards and create a construction paper cover for a book of animal facts.



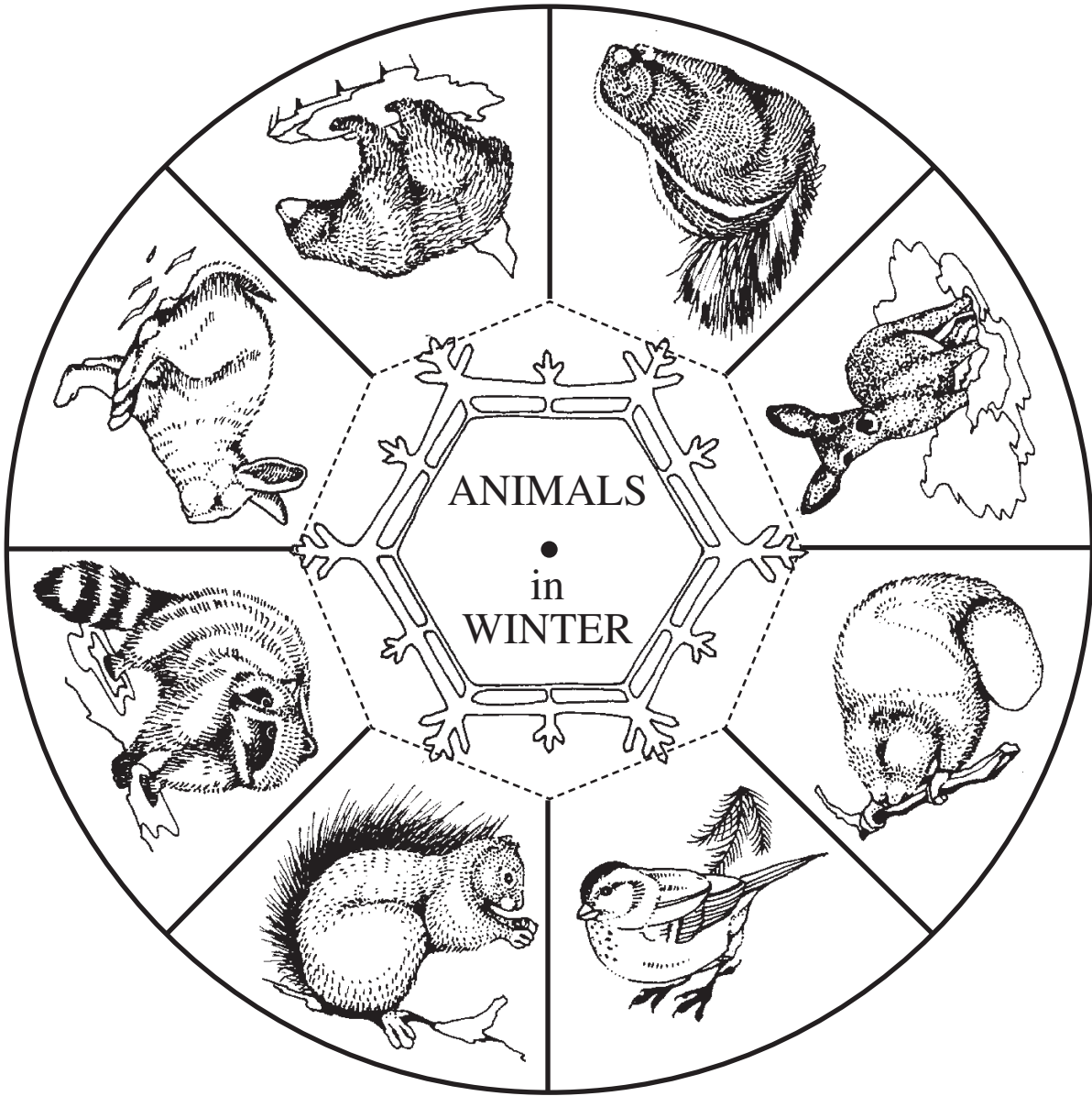
WINTER IS COMING

The brown bear yawns and curls up to sleep.
The green turtle digs in the mud so deep.
White rabbits huddle to stay warm in their nest.
Chipmunks, too, take a cold weather rest.
Squirrels nibble acorns in a big oak tree.
And you can cuddle up, right next to me!

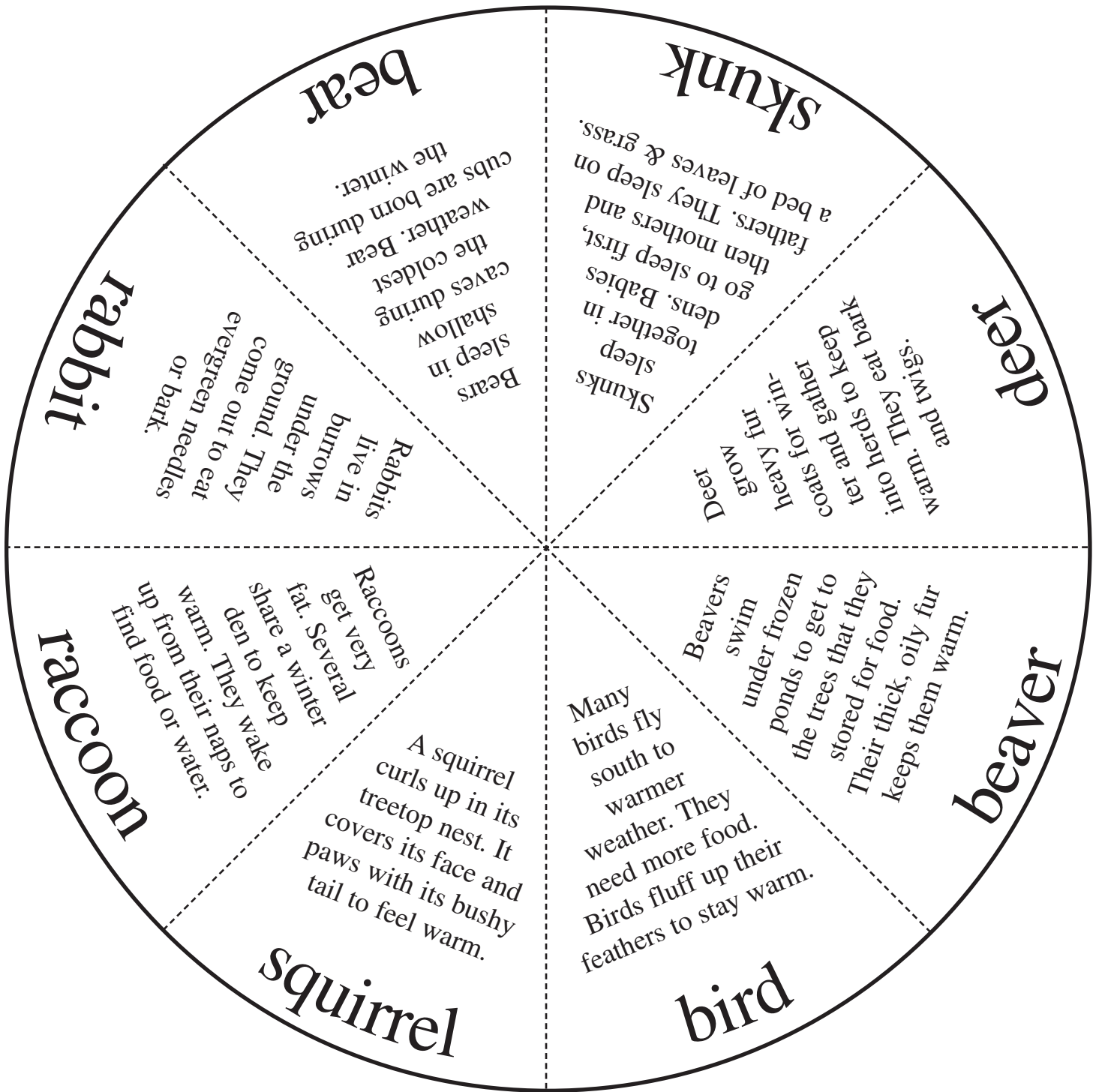


Winter Peek-A-Boo 2

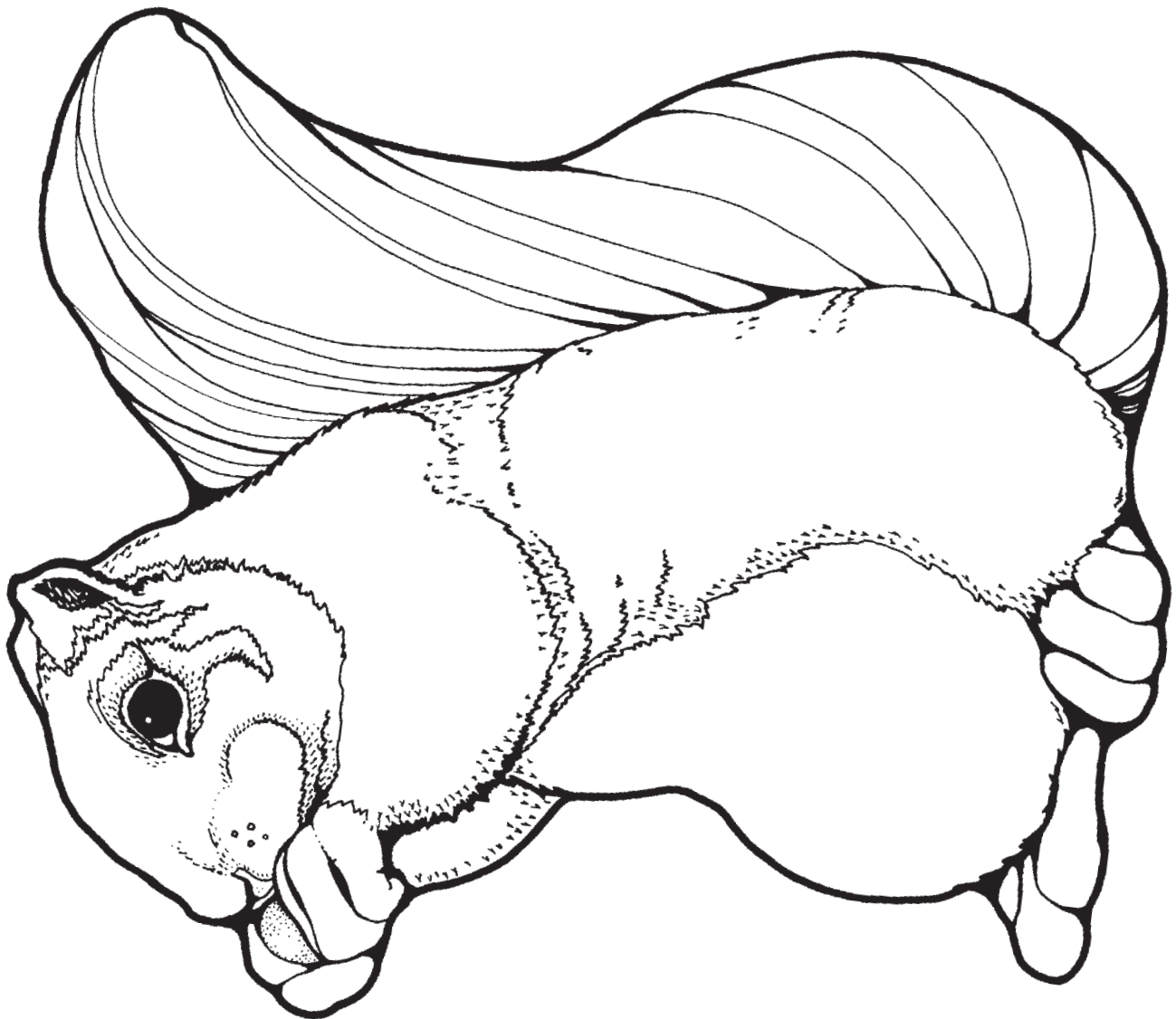
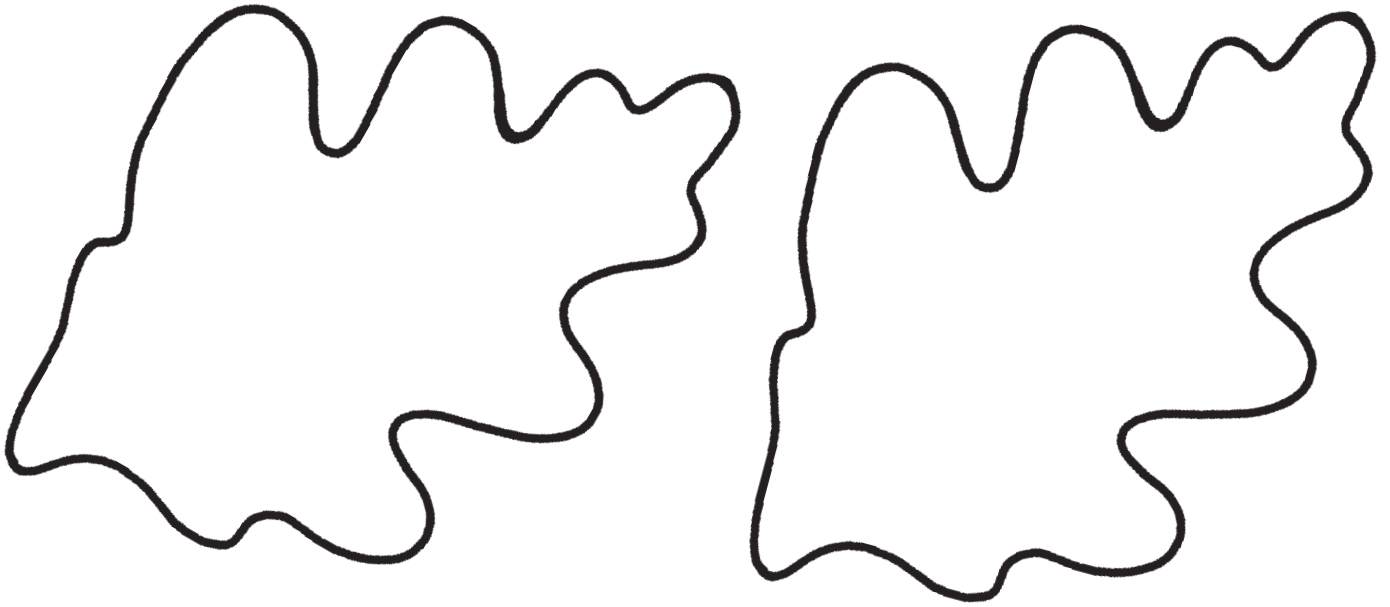
Animals in Winter Fact Wheel 1

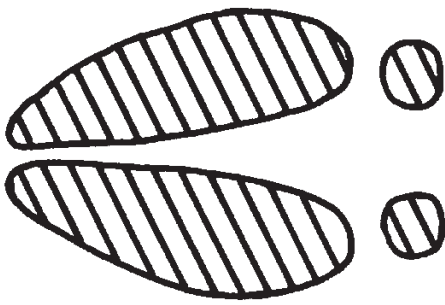


Animals in Winter Fact Wheel 2



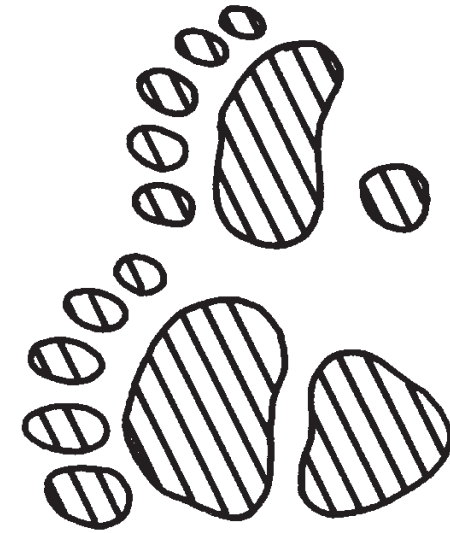
Home for a Squirrel Patterns





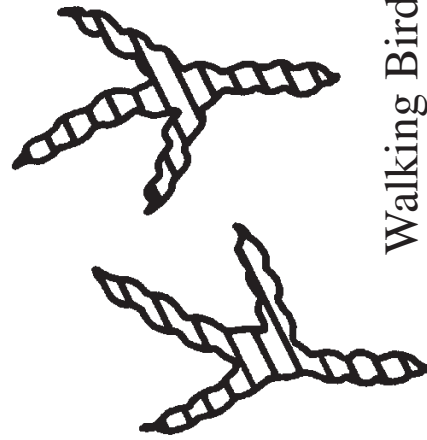
Deer

Deer leave pairs of large hoof marks with a ridge where the hoof is divided.



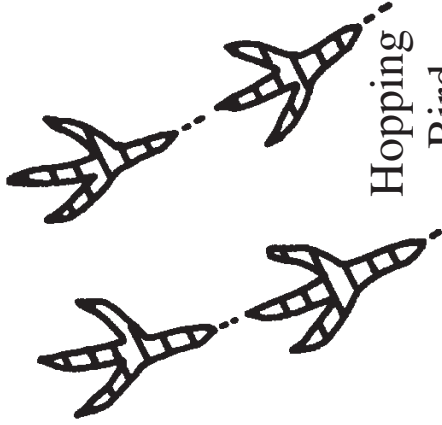
Bear

Bears leave very large footprints with thick toes and long nails, in groups of two.



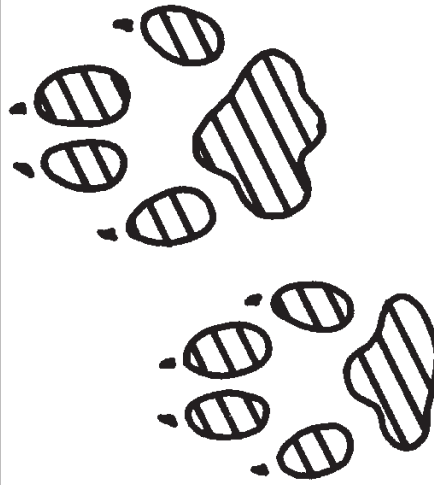
Walking Bird

Walking birds have four toes, but in snow they leave a row of tracks that look like arrows.



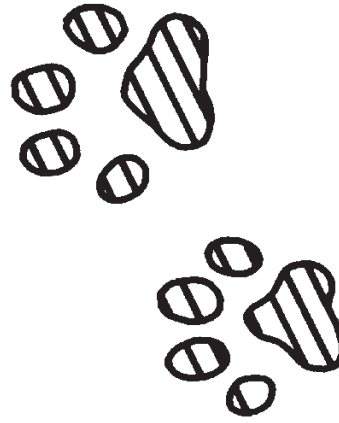
Hopping Bird

These birds have one toe in back and three in front. They land in the snow with both feet and hop along.



Dog

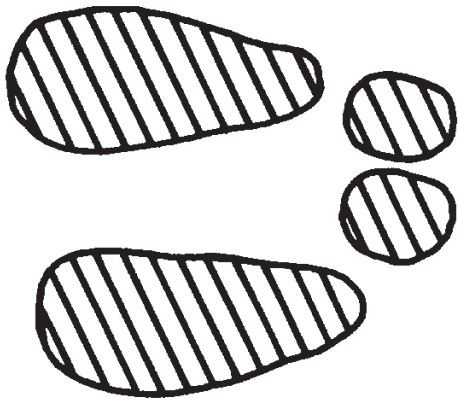
Dogs leave a single line of marks that show claws. Larger dogs have larger claw marks.



Cat

Cats leave a single file of round marks without a trace of claws as the walk daintily in snow.





Rabbit

Long hind legs leave two long tracks followed by two small round ones made by the front legs.



Squirrel

Squirrel tracks are found in sets of four—two front feet and two hind feet.



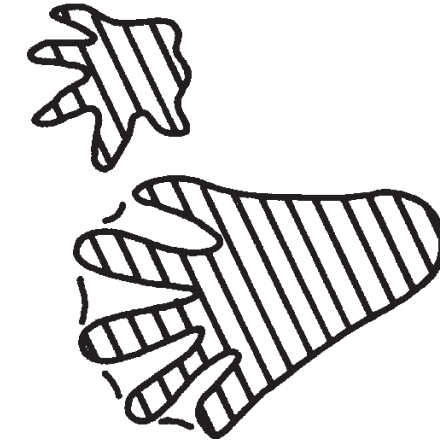
Raccoon

Raccoons leave prints like small handprints. You can see palms, with small finger-like toes and claws.



Skunk

Skunk prints look almost like footprints with the sole of the foot and tiny toes.



Beaver

Beaver prints show web feet and long toenails. Their back feet are larger than their front feet.



Opossum

Opossum tracks are much like the raccoon's. They drag their thin tails along behind them, leaving another track.

