



Schools and Outdoor Learning Environments



www.cpwsole.org



**Mission: Connect kids and their families to the outdoors!**

Visit our website at [cpwsole.org](http://cpwsole.org) for more resources, photos, and stories!

Enjoy what you read? Click [here](#) to join our mailing list.

## Activities to keep the wonder in winter

### Get outside!

Get into the holiday spirit by visiting one of these light exhibits across the Front Range!

Fort Collins- [Garden of Lights](#)

Denver- [Blossoms of Light](#) and [December Delights](#)

Littleton- [Trail of Lights](#)

Marks your calendars for our **Family Program at Jackson Lake State Park** on February 20th as we navigate the tricky art of migration and learn how snowflakes get their shape with the Poudre Learning Center. Join our mailing list to get more information on registration.

Jump into nature with the [Majestic View Nature Center](#) (Arvada) or the [Carson Nature Center](#) (Littleton) through guided hikes, stargazing, and arts and crafts.



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Looking for something fun to do this winter? Try one of these ideas from [Generation Wild!](#)

1. Catch snowflakes on your tongue.
2. Soak in a natural hot spring.
3. Make snow ice cream, recipe [here](#).
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## Help wintering birds with a backyard pine cone feeder



Some birds, like this house finch, can be found in Colorado year-round, while others migrate through the state.

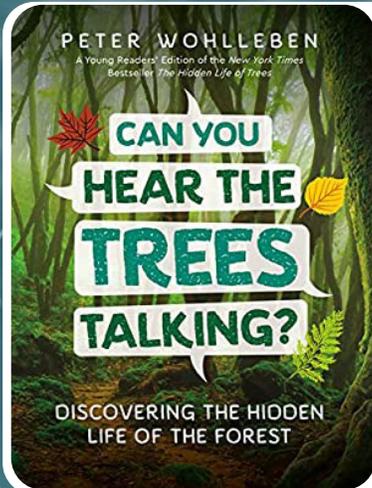
### Materials:

- Cone from outside (pine, spruce, fir)
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- [Nutritious](#) bird seed
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### Instructions

1. Tie the string around your pine cone.
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### Meteor Shower



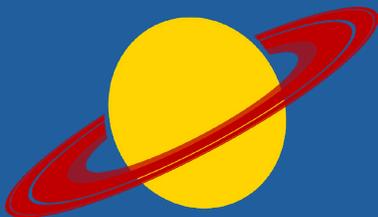
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### Stargazing

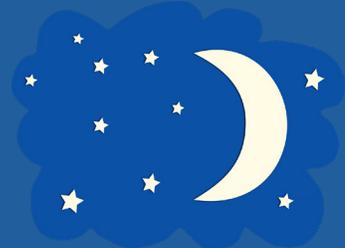


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## Born for the snow: Why winter is the lynx's favorite season



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© Eric Bégin



Lynx indicate their mood using their long, black ear tufts. What do you think this cat is thinking?

## Hibernation: More than just a big sleep

What do bears, bats, and snails all have in common?  
They hibernate in the wintertime!

**True/False: Hibernating is the same thing as sleeping.**  
False! Hibernating isn't plain old sleeping. In addition to catching some Zzzs, hibernating animals reduce their heart rate, breathing, and body temperature to save energy when food is scarce.

### Hibernators sleep straight through the winter, right?

Not so fast! Even the deepest of hibernators wake occasionally to eat stored food or go to the bathroom. However, there is a lot of variation when it comes to hibernation. The bodies of "true" hibernators slow down so much that it takes a lot to wake them up voluntarily. Chipmunks are a good example. Other hibernators, are "light sleepers". They don't reduce their energy expenditure quite as much, but can easily move from hibernating to being awake. Some scientists call this hibernating, while others refer to it as "torpor". Animals like bears and raccoons fit into this category. Still other animals use very short bursts of torpor (<24 hours), triggered by factors like cold temperatures. Many birds, for example, will go into torpor on cold nights.

### Which alpine species spends more time hibernating, the boreal toad or the marmot?

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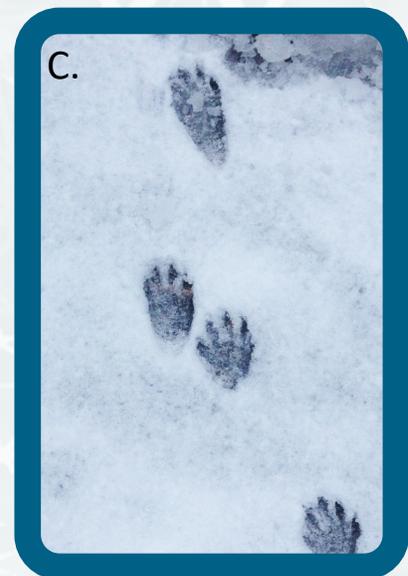
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© canopic



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Looking for more opportunities to ski or snowshoe? Look no farther than [Yampatika](#)! Many programs are free or low cost and catered to families and beginners.



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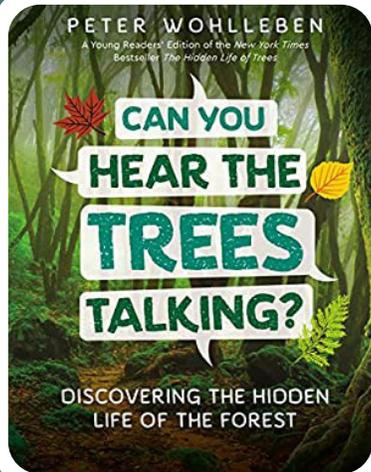
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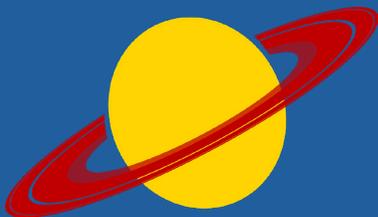
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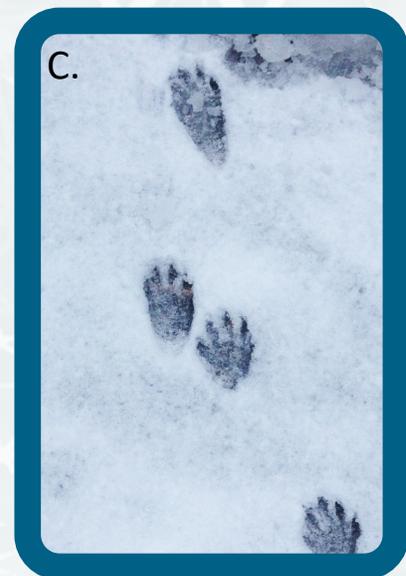
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Still need a few holiday gifts? Drop by the [Garden of the Gods Nature Center](#) for some grab-n-go crafts that will make great stocking stuffers! Need a break from screen time? Consider taking to the trails as part of their family friendly scavenger hunt. Submissions accepted through December 31st.

What's better than holiday lights? Holiday lights AND animals! Reserve your tickets to [ElectriCritters at the Pueblo Zoo](#), running through December 27th.

Had enough screen time this holiday? Hop over to [Mueller State Park](#) for a variety of guided First Day Hikes on January 1st. With many options, there is something for everyone!



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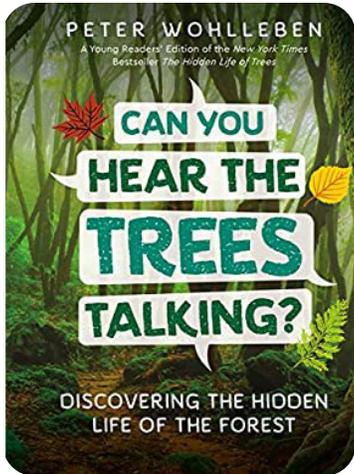
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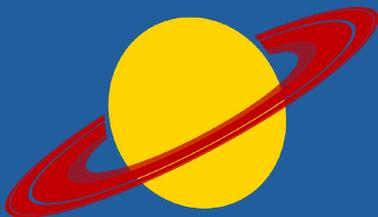
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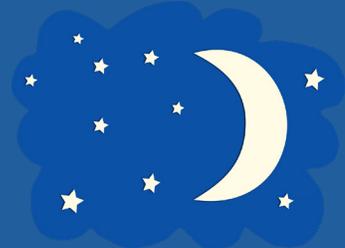


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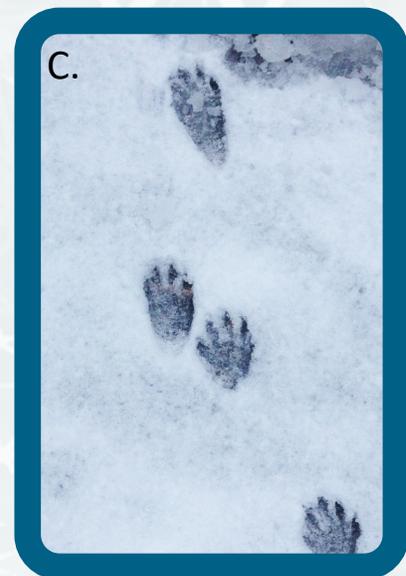
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Live in or near Delta County? Check out **The Nature Connection's Pop-up Community Ski Days**, where Delta County kids can get free XC ski gear for the day. \$5 for adults and kids from neighboring counties.



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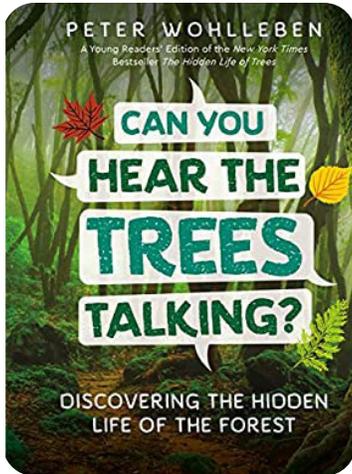
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## Dark dinner times got you bummed out? Keep your chin up, to the sky that is...

### Meteor Shower



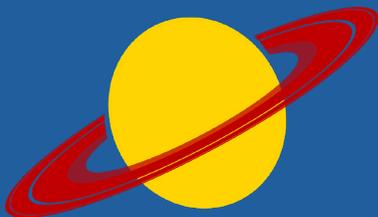
Meteors, or shooting stars, are small space rocks that create streaks of light as they enter Earth's atmosphere. **The upcoming Quadrantids Meteor Shower is best seen on the evening of January 2nd**, though meteors should be visible from January 1st - 5th. Clocking up to 40 meteors per hour at its peak, you're sure to find a shooting star fit for making a wish.

### Stargazing



Constellations are groups of stars that form a pattern when viewed from Earth. While you can see many constellations on clear nights, the best time to observe faint, far away galaxies is during the New Moon. This is when the moon is cast into shadow by the sun, so it looks like there is no moon at all! **Our next New Moon is January 13th**. Use this [sky map](#) to help navigate the winter night sky.

City lights drowning out the stars? Check out our [top six State Park picks for stargazing!](#)



Want to get to know the moon a little better? Why not keep a [moon observation journal](#)?



Feeling crafty? How about making [solar system tree ornaments](#)?



Make your own [star viewer](#) using many items you have at home!

Make a constellation by using a flashlight and punching holes in these [constellation cards](#).

Haven't spaced out yet?  
Visit UC Boulder's [Astronomy at Home page](#) for even more activities.

# Wildlife in winter: Some love it, some sleep right through it!

## Born for the snow: Why winter is the lynx's favorite season



Between skiing, snowshoeing, or icefishing, it isn't surprising that many Coloradans enjoy winter. But one rare Colorado cat NEEDS it.

The lynx was reintroduced into southwest Colorado in 1999 and about 150-200 felines continue to thrive in the rugged San Juan Mountains, where 12-25 feet of snow can fall each year.

This works out well for the lynx, whose oversized paws act as snowshoes, allowing them to adeptly hunt their favorite meal, snowshoe hares, all winter long.

However, those big paws aren't as graceful in habitats with less snow, where the lynx misses meals to the more common coyote or bobcat.

© Eric Bégin



Lynx indicate their mood using their long, black ear tufts. What do you think this cat is thinking?

## Hibernation: More than just a big sleep

**What do bears, bats, and snails all have in common?**  
They hibernate in the wintertime!

**True/False: Hibernating is the same thing as sleeping.**  
False! Hibernating isn't plain old sleeping. In addition to catching some Zzzs, hibernating animals reduce their heart rate, breathing, and body temperature to save energy when food is scarce.

**Hibernators sleep straight through the winter, right?**

Not so fast! Even the deepest of hibernators wake occasionally to eat stored food or go to the bathroom. However, there is a lot of variation when it comes to hibernation. The bodies of "true" hibernators slow down so much that it takes a lot to wake them up voluntarily. Chipmunks are a good example. Other hibernators, are "light sleepers". They don't reduce their energy expenditure quite as much, but can easily move from hibernating to being awake. Some scientists call this hibernating, while others refer to it as "torpor". Animals like bears and raccoons fit into this category. Still other animals use very short bursts of torpor (<24 hours), triggered by factors like cold temperatures. Many birds, for example, will go into torpor on cold nights.

**Which alpine species spends more time hibernating, the boreal toad or the marmot?**

Trick question! Both spend over half their lives hibernating waiting for warmer weather.



Don't try this at home! Wish though we might, people cannot hibernate.

## Wildlife in winter: Some love it, some sleep right through it!

Animals that don't hibernate or migrate to warmer places continue to be active in the winter. Sleuth out their tracks!

### Pro Tips

- Pay close attention to the overall shape.
- Count the toes.
- Using a ruler, measure the size of both the print, and the distance between prints.
- When in doubt, take a photo or sketch the tracks using a nature journal. You can always use an [ID guide](#) later!

### Food for Thought

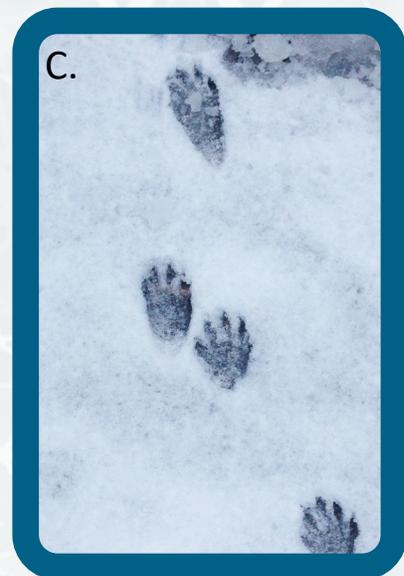
- Can you tell whether the animal was walking, running, or hopping? Why?
- Where do the tracks go? Follow them for a while, if safe.
- Are there other signs, like scat (poop), fur, or feathers nearby?



© canopic



© heidi bakk-hansen



© California Department of Fish and Wildlife

A. Why, what long feet you have! The prints in the front are actually this animal's BACK feet. What kind of animal hops like that?

B. Who let the dogs out?? Just kidding. We're talking wildlife here. While this animal also has four toes and visible claws, their prints are smaller and more oval than your average canine.

C. This animal uses its nimble hands to feel for fish, worms, and other aquatic treats. They're also handy for opening unsecured dumpsters!



Email your guesses to [dnr\\_cpwsol@state.co.us](mailto:dnr_cpwsol@state.co.us) for a prize!

**Keep an eye out after the next fresh snowfall for these not-so-sneaky wildlife.**