

# A Forest in Winter



Illustration for The Banner by Anita Barghigiani

**AS AUTUMN FADES** into winter, snow begins to blanket the ground, and the forest seems silent and still. So what happens to all the animals in winter?

When winter comes to the north, people wear extra layers of clothes and turn on the heat in their homes to help everyone stay warm. Extra layers and heavy coats are ways we insulate ourselves from the cold.

Some animals have warm “clothing” built in and survive winter with insulation from fur, feathers, or fat. Foxes even use their tails as built-in scarves! God’s design for snow also helps insulate animals in the winter. Snow can trap heat and helps keep out wind. Did you know there’s a whole world of life living under the snow? Animals such as voles keep warm by staying under the snow all winter long.

The forest is quieter in the winter than in the summer because some animals use the winter to take a break through hibernation. Turtles bury themselves in pond bottoms, and insects find insulated places in old logs. A wood frog waits for spring under a pile of leaves with 60% of the water in its body frozen! That’s pretty incredible!

Some animals are not built for the cold, so they migrate. They move to places where it is warmer and they can find more food. In fact, 90% of birds that spend summer in the boreal forest (that’s the forest furthest north) will migrate or leave the forest for the winter. Some migrate great distances, even flying all the way to South America, but others move a shorter distance, like flying to Ohio. And the 10% that stay behind? They use insulation. Chickadees group together to stay warm at night, and grouse bury themselves in snow overnight to stay warm.

## Try This

One of God’s many amazing creations is the bear. Bears are specially designed to sleep all winter. When a bear hibernates, its whole body slows down, and its heart rate can be as slow as eight beats per minute. How many times does your heart beat in a minute?

## Dig Deeper

In Job 12:7-10 and Romans 1:20 we read that creation reveals the power and glory of God. Creation is filled with wonderful creatures designed by God, each with its own unique features. What makes your favorite animal special? How has God designed it to be able to survive in its habitat? **B**



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