

Saint John's Outdoor University Field Trip Overview

Available for grades K-6th

Winter Animal Signs and Tracking

Objective: Students will learn about how animals and humans survive the winter months. Students will discuss and explore the ways of hibernation, migration and toleration through looking at mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and humans. They will specifically look at toleration and the evidence and signs of winter life in animals. Students will work individually and in teams to help complete guided activities.

Field Activities:

What's in the Bag?: This activity introduces students to the different signs of animal activity in the winter they may find in the forest. Real examples of signs are used to prepare them for what they may find.

Animal Detectives: Students will go through a guided exploration of the forest, searching for the 'clues' animals leave behind that give us an idea of their activities before we got there. Signs looked for include tracks, trails, scat (droppings), body parts, homes, shelter, rubbings, and food sources.

Rabbit and Fox: During a winter version of freeze tag, students try to survive by not being 'eaten' or by finding something to eat. Discussion of different techniques and how they are similar or different to real animals' survival tactics will follow.

Track Stories: Using replicas of real animal tracks, students will create their own track stories about what goes on in the woods when humans aren't around. Students will work in small groups and will share their stories with other groups and adults.

Human Winter Survival: Students will discuss the ways humans have learned from animals to survive the winter and how to stay safe when outside during cold weather.

Key points covered in each class:

- Three main ways animals survive the winter: migration, toleration, hibernation
- Examples of common signs of animals in the winter: tracks, trails, scat, body parts, homes, shelter, rubbings, and food sources
- Different ways animals use to survive as prey or find food as predators
- Techniques used to interpret animal signs
- Ways humans have learned to survive the winter by watching animals
- How to explore appropriately and safely in nature during the winter

Animals active during the winter we may encounter/talk about:

- White-tailed deer
- Squirrels: red, gray, fox
- Rabbits
- Birds such as chickadees, woodpeckers, crows, sparrows,
- Owls
- Coyote
- Fox
- Beaver
- Humans!