



Ranger Rick's Winter Fun Guide

Celebrate the coldest the time of year!



Ranger Rick
Cub

Ranger
Rick Jr.

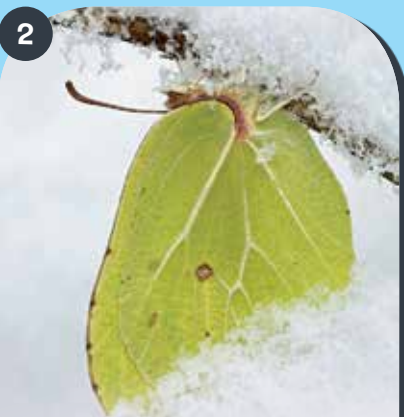
Ranger Rick

Chillout!

Celebrate winter with these cool facts about the coldest time of year.

BY HANNAH SCHARDT
ART BY JACK DESROCHER
PHOTOS/MINDEN PICTURES

1 Snowflakes always have six sides or points.



Some **butterflies** have a special “antifreeze” in their bodies that keeps them alive in icy cold weather.

3 A red fox can hear rodents scurrying under several feet of snow.



4 Two-thirds of Earth’s fresh water is found in **glaciers**—large bodies of ice that stay frozen from year to year.

5 A **walrus** may use its tusks to break through several inches of ice so it can get into—or out of—the water.



6 **Garter snakes** gather by the dozens to snooze away the winter in cozy dens.

7 All of the coldest countries in the world are in the Northern Hemisphere—the “top” half of the globe.

8 The coat of a **snowshoe hare** turns from brown to white in winter, making the hare harder to see in the snow.



9 **Voles and gophers** build tunnels in the snow so they can look for food without being spotted by predators.

10 A **black bear** won’t poop for months while hibernating.

11 Snowflakes are colorless. Snow looks white because of the way light bounces off ice crystals.



Deer have a hard time moving through deep snow. So in winter they often hang out under trees, where less snow piles up.

13 Each year, millions of monarch butterflies travel as far as 2,500 miles to spend winter in Mexico.

14 The super-snowy city of Syracuse, New York, once passed a law banning snowfall earlier than Christmas Eve. (It didn’t work!)


15 December 21 is the shortest day of this year.

16 Many plants would not be able to flower in spring without first being chilled by cold winter temperatures.

17 A **ruffed grouse** stays warm by burying itself under the snow.

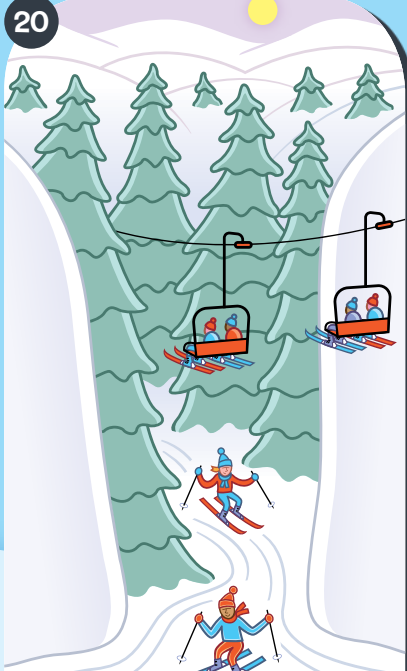


18 In 2007, 8,962 people gathered in Bismarck, North Dakota, to make snow angels—a world record!



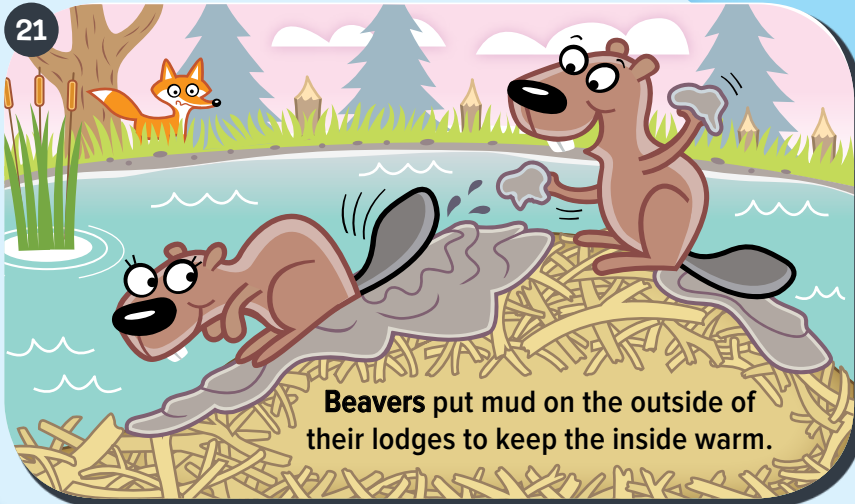
19 The coldest air temperature ever recorded on Earth was in Antarctica: -128.6° F.

20



A ski area in Washington State once got 95 feet of snow in a single winter.

21




Beavers put mud on the outside of their lodges to keep the inside warm.

22 In winter, **elk** and **bison** in Yellowstone National Park keep warm by hanging out near the park's steamy hot springs.



23 A colony of honey bees may eat more than 50 pounds of honey in one winter.




24 The area beneath the snow is called the *subnivean* (sub-NIH-vee-un) zone.


25 A hungry **mountain lion** may catch a deer by following its hoofprints in the snow.

26 **Chipmunks** hibernate, but not all winter long. They wake up every few days to eat some of the food they stored in fall.


27 For several winter weeks in the Arctic, the sun never rises at all. **Reindeer** that live there have special eyes that let them see in the dark.



28 About 10 percent of Earth's land is covered with ice year round.




29 The super-soft underwool of a **musk ox** is eight times warmer than a sheep's wool.



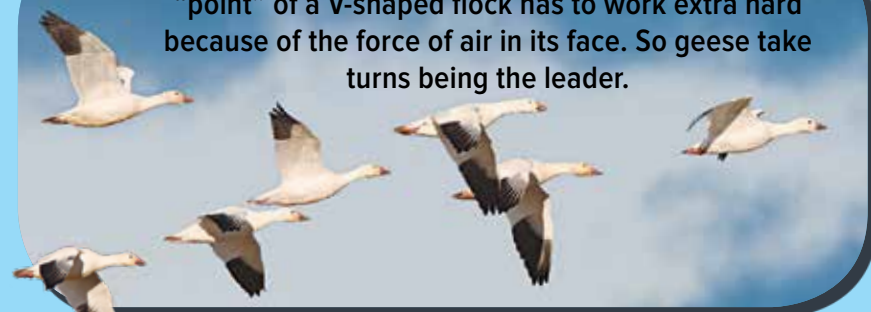
30 As winter approaches, a **grizzly bear** will gain as much as 400 pounds of fat to prepare for a months-long hibernation.

31 South of the Equator, December, January, and February are the hottest months of the year.


32 During hibernation, a turtle called the **red-eared slider** might not take a breath for weeks at a time.



33 When flying south for the winter, the **goose** at the "point" of a V-shaped flock has to work extra hard because of the force of air in its face. So geese take turns being the leader.



34 **Polar bears** have black skin. It helps absorb heat from the sun.




35 It may not feel like it to you, but Earth is closest to the sun in early January.

36 The **alpine marmot** lives high up in mountains, where it hibernates for up to eight months a year.

37 Not everyone sleeps through the coldest days of winter. For **gray squirrels**, January is the best time for starting families.

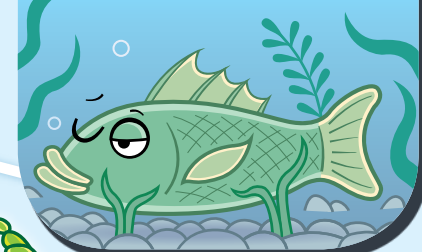


38 A **Canada lynx** is only about twice the size of a house cat. But its paws may be bigger than your hands—just right for walking on snow.



39 A **Siberian salamander** can survive being frozen for several years.

40 In a frozen lake, most **fish** stay near the bottom, where the water is warmer. They conserve oxygen by moving very little. 🐟



10 Things to Do This Winter

Many animals are still out and about in winter. You should be, too!
Just be sure to bundle up.

BY HANNAH SCHARDT; ART BY BRIAN WHITE

1 Not all birds go away for the winter. **Put out a birdfeeder.** Then count how many different kinds of birds visit your backyard.

2 **Decorate the trees in your yard with icy “ornaments.”** Fill small baking molds or muffin pans with water and evergreen leaves, seed pods, and other natural items. Put one end of a loop of string into each mold, then freeze. Run water over the molds to release the ice ornaments, then hang them outside.

3 **Start a garden indoors.** Many bulbs and seeds will grow well on a sunny windowsill.

4 Late winter is a great time to hear owls calling for mates. **So go on an “owl prowl.”** Take a nighttime walk and keep an ear out for *hoo-hoo*—ever is lurking in the nearby trees.

5 **Use a needle and thread to make a string of unsalted popcorn and cranberries.** Hang it up in your yard. It will look festive—and make local birds and squirrels very happy indeed!

6 Are you tired of building snowmen? **Try building a snow bunny, snow owl, or other snow animal.** For a how-to, visit rangerrick.org/snow-sculptures.

7 **Build a brush pile in your yard.** This provides a place for wildlife to hide out from winter storms.

8 **Go nest-spotting.** Bare trees are great places to find squirrels’ leafy nests, robins’ cup-shaped nests, and hornets’ papery, football-shaped nests.

9 **Make a winter wreath.** Take a walk in a field or forest. Collect dried seedheads, grasses, flowers, and berries, then tuck them into a premade grapevine wreath. Tie on a few pieces of dried apple or other fruit. Hang the wreath outside on your house or a tree. Then watch as birds start feasting.

10 **Right after a snowfall, take a walk to look for animal tracks.** Try to figure out who—or what—walked there before you did! 🐾

