

WILD TIMES



KIDS MAGAZINE

WINTER 2018

INSIDE:

How Game and Fish moves bighorn sheep

Get prepared to find tracks this winter

Learn about the black-capped chickadee



ACTIVITIES | LESSONS | INFORMATION | FUN

Winter — prime time to watch wildlife

Snow is an important part of many Wyoming habitats. It provides a good amount of the water that is available for plants and animals to live throughout the year, especially once it melts in the spring. It also supplies water to streams and lakes where fish live.

Many animals stay active during the wintertime and travel through snow in order to find food and shelter. Winter is a great time to see and learn about wildlife. When there is snow on the ground, we can see what types of animals have traveled through an area. If you can find some tracks and look closely at them, you can learn a lot about what the animals did and where they went.

Keep reading to learn more about the wildlife that are out and about during wintertime!



Game and Fish moves bighorn sheep

By Tara Hodges
Cody Region Information and Education

Along with help from many volunteers and local landowners, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department recently moved 20 bighorn sheep from Lovell, Wyoming, to an area north of Rawlins, Wyoming.

To capture the bighorn sheep in Devil's Canyon, a person in a helicopter shot a net onto them. After the net landed on the bighorn sheep, a person on the ground quickly and gently took the net off and strapped the sheep into a sling.

The bighorn sheep got a shot of medicine that relaxed them and they also wore a mask that covered its eyes to help keep it calm. The helicopter carried the bighorn sheep in slings over to the area where the sheep were given a quick health checkup.

The Game and Fish biologists put a special GPS collar around the sheep's neck so that they can study where the bighorn sheep go after they are released. Finally, the bighorn sheep took a ride in a hay-filled livestock trailer to its new home.

The sheep were released in Miner's Canyon on the east end of the Ferris Mountains to join the group of bighorn sheep that already live there.

Game and Fish does this because the Devil's Canyon herd of bighorn sheep has more animals in it than the habitat can support in a healthy way. The Ferris-Seminole herd of bighorn sheep isn't doing as well and their habitat can support more bighorn sheep, so it is a nice solution to move the bighorn sheep from the bigger herd to the smaller one.

Game and Fish has captured and moved bighorn sheep from the Devil's



After giving the sheep a shot of medicine to relax them, Wyoming Game and Fish Department employees transfer them to a helicopter that will take them to an area for their health checkup.
(Photo by Tara Hodges)

Canyon herd to the Ferris-Seminole herd five times now. In 2010, they moved 12 bighorn sheep, followed by 25

bighorn sheep in 2015, 24 bighorn sheep in 2016, and then 22 bighorn sheep earlier in 2017.

WILDLIFE PROFILES



Bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*)

Range: Bighorn sheep can be found across a large portion of western North America, from the Rocky Mountains in Canada to the deserts of the Southwestern United States and even down into Mexico.

Size: Bighorn sheep are about 3 feet tall at the shoulder and 4 feet long. On average, they weigh 150 to 300 pounds. Adult females are smaller than males.

Habitat: Alpine meadows, grassy mountain slopes, and foothills below rugged, rocky cliffs.

Young: Female bighorn sheep (called ewes) typically have one lamb each spring that nurses for 4-6 months.

Predators: Their most common predator is the

mountain lion, and eagles occasionally prey upon young bighorn sheep.

Food: Bighorn sheep eat grasses, forbs (flowering plants), as well as buds and twigs of shrubs and small trees.

Did you know? Each fall, male bighorn sheep, called rams, battle for the right to mate by ramming their big horns against each other at speeds of up to 20 miles per hour until one of them backs down. Bighorn sheep skulls have a special design to cushion these head-on collisions. The male bighorn sheep's horns can weigh 30 pounds! Female bighorn sheep also have horns, but they are much smaller.

WILDLIFE PROFILES



Black-capped chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*)

Range: The black-capped chickadee can be found year-round throughout the northern United States and Canada.

Size: Black-capped chickadees are about 5" long and weigh only half an ounce.

Habitat: Black-capped chickadees can be found in many different types of forest, as well as in parks and even your own backyard.

Young: Black-capped chickadees lay 6 to 8 creamy white eggs with red or brown specks in a nest that they build inside a hole in a tree or other little space. The chicks hatch after about 2 weeks, and have closed eyes and no feathers. The parents feed and take care of the chicks for several weeks until they grow feathers

and can fly. This is called "fledging."

Predators: Black-capped chickadees warn their flocks of nearby predators by making their "chickadee-dee-dee" call that they are well known for. Their most common predators include other birds like hawks, owls, and Northern Shrikes, as well as cats, weasels, and squirrels.

Food: Black-capped chickadees eat mostly insects in the summer, and seeds and berries in the winter.

Did you know? Black-capped chickadees have an amazing memory! They like to hide (or cache) their food under tree bark, in pine needles, or in a pile of dead leaves, and can remember where they hid their food for up to a month.



Beginning as early as November, the Game and Fish Department begins herd classification by flying and driving near deer, pronghorn and elk to count them and collect other information. (Photo by WGFD)

Deer and elk classification

If you have seen biologists from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department flying airplanes over deer, pronghorn, and elk, or driving a truck near them during the winter months, you may have wondered what exactly they are doing.

This is a great question! Beginning as early as November, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department begins to do something we call “herd classifica-

tion.”

In order to do this, biologists and wardens drive past or fly over herds of deer, elk, or pronghorn and count how many animals they see. While they count, they also keep track of whether the animal was a female, male, or juvenile (a young animal that is not an adult yet).

“Data from these surveys are used to estimate how many total animals

are out there,” explains Corey Class, the Game and Fish wildlife management coordinator in Laramie.

Wildlife managers at Game and Fish use the results from the classifications as well as other information like how successful hunters were in order to decide how long hunting seasons should last and how many hunting licenses can be sold in future years.

How to find tracks this winter

If you want to get outside in the snow to find some wildlife tracks of your own, here are some tips and tricks for a fun, safe adventure.



What to wear:

- Be sure that you bundle up if the weather is cold. Wildlife have lots of fur to keep them warm, but we do not.

It is important to:

- Give wildlife space- you may be able to watch them for a longer time if you stay quiet and a safe distance away from the animals. That way the wildlife doesn't feel scared and you will stay safe.
- Never go exploring without telling an adult where you are going, and it never hurts to bring someone along as well.



What to bring:

- A camera to take a picture of cool tracks or wildlife.



- A pencil and paper to sketch drawings of interesting things you see.

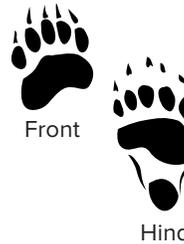
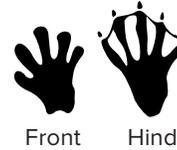
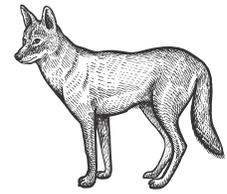
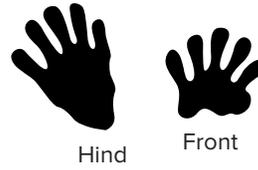
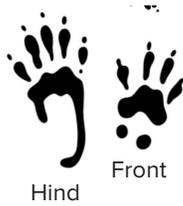


Questions to ask:

- How big are the tracks? What is the shape of the tracks?
- How quickly do you think the animal was moving?
- Why do you think the animal was here?
- What other signs of wildlife do you see? Sometimes wildlife leave behind bits of fur, scratches, rubs, or chew marks on plants and trees, and scat (which is another word for poop)!
- With some practice, you can identify the kind of animal that left the tracks or sign and what the animal was doing.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Match the tracks to the animal



Having trouble matching animals to their tracks?

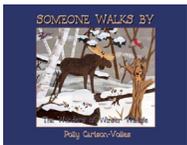
That's ok! It can be very tricky. Here are some hints to match these wildlife to their tracks:

- Beavers have webbed feet to help them swim better.
- Grizzly bears have really long claws- about 3 inches in real life!
- Coyote tracks look a lot like dog tracks, but are a little smaller.

- Deer have hooves.
- Squirrels have 4 toes on their front paws and 5 on their back paws.
- Raccoons have 5 toes on their front paws and 5 on their back paws.

LEARNING LINKS

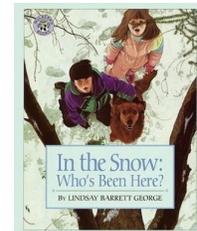
Books to check out



Someone Walks By
by Polly Carlson-Voiles



Big Tracks, Little Tracks
by Millicent E. Selsam



In the Snow: Who's Been Here?
by Lindsay Barrett George



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