

Snowshoe Hare's Winter Home

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Something cold tickled Snowshoe Hare on the nose. He looked up to see snowflakes tumbling and twirling. They carpeted the grassy clearing, coated the pine trees, and capped the rocks. Snowshoe Hare could hardly feel them dusting his fur. He leaped up to catch them on his tongue. Each one vanished before he could taste it.

“Quit fooling around,” said Bear, ambling into the clearing. “Can’t you feel how cold the air is? That’s the signal. It’s time to hibernate.”

“What does that mean?” Snowshoe Hare asked, stopping to catch his breath.

“I find a place to sleep when winter comes,” Bear said. “I won’t come out again until it’s warmer.”

Snowshoe Hare didn’t feel cold. Why should Bear, with her thick fur coat, need to hide from winter? “Where do you go?” Snowshoe Hare asked.

“Up in the hills. Got a cozy den all picked out.” Bear looked up at the heavy clouds and yawned. “If I were you, I’d find a winter home, too. See you in the spring.”

Snowshoe Hare watched Bear lumber away. “Sleep?” he asked. “That sounds boring.” He hopped a few steps and grinned at his own tracks on the snowy ground. “I’d rather go exploring.”





Near the pond, Snowshoe Hare met Beaver cutting branches from a fallen poplar tree.

“Are you having lunch?” Snowshoe Hare asked.

“Nope. Gathering branches to take to the bottom of my pond,” Beaver answered.

“Why?” asked Snowshoe Hare.

“Those snow flurries are the signal that my pond will soon freeze over. I’ll have to stay in my lodge,” Beaver said, dragging a branch down the muddy slope of the pond. “I can reach this food through my underwater tunnel. You’d better store some food or you’ll go hungry.”

Snowshoe Hare watched Beaver and the branch sink out of sight. “Who wants to spend all winter eating soggy old branches?”

Water trickled out of Beaver's dam and became a stream. Snowshoe Hare hopped along its edge, nibbling juicy grass. He leaped back as cold water splashed him. Trout blew bubbles near the surface.

"Aren't you afraid the water will freeze?" Snowshoe Hare asked.



"Ice on top doesn't bother me. It's the signal to stay near the bottom where the water is warmer." Trout waved his fins. "Want to join me down below?"

Snowshoe Hare dipped a paw, then shook off the chilly drops. "I'd rather stay dry, thanks."

A lumpy shadow rose beneath Trout. A small head popped up. "Aren't you two paying attention to the signal? It's time to hibernate," said Turtle.

“But you already have your house on your back,” Snowshoe Hare said.

“Won’t keep the cold out. I’ll snuggle into the mud at the bottom of Beaver’s pond.” Turtle sneezed a snowflake off her nose. “You’ll need to keep warm, too.”

Snowshoe Hare shrugged and thumped his foot. “I have to stay above the water. I couldn’t breathe down there.”

“Suit yourself,” Turtle said. She crawled out of the stream and headed for the pond as snow covered her shell.





That evening, the air crackled with cold. Snowshoe Hare saw Duck circling above the pond.

“I can’t land. It’s starting to freeze,” Duck called down to Snowshoe Hare. “Happens every year about this time. It’s the signal for me to get moving.”

“Where are you going?” Snowshoe Hare asked.

“South. It’s warmer there. I can’t stay here if there’s no open water. How would I get food from the bottom of the pond? Why don’t you come along?” Duck said, spiraling upward.

Snowshoe Hare peered over his shoulder. “No wings!” he called out, but Duck was a tiny speck against the blue-green ribbons of northern lights dancing in the sky.

Alone, Snowshoe Hare watched the snow pile up all around. Winter had arrived, and his friends had disappeared. They all had places to go for the cold season.

“What am I going to do?” Snowshoe Hare wondered. “I don’t want to sleep all winter like Bear. I can’t stay under the ice like Beaver and Turtle and Trout. I can’t fly away like Duck.”

Just then, Snowshoe Hare heard some friendly voices: “Stay with us! We’ll show you how to play hide-and-seek with Fox.”





“Who’s there?” Snowshoe Hare asked, peering through the flurries at three ghostly shapes.

“We don’t hibernate or travel far away. We can dig through the snow for grass or snack on buds. We’ll find a cozy bed in a snowbank. Hardly anyone will notice us.”

“Where did you get your white coats?” asked Snowshoe Hare.

“Take a look at yourself!” they said and laughed.

Snowshoe Hare did. His coat was white, too! Bit by bit, his brown fur had changed when cold days signaled the coming winter.

“We’re off!” the three snowshoe hares cried as they dashed off across the snowdrifts. “Come with us!”

Snowshoe Hare leaped high, then bounded along the trail left by their huge feet.

This was his winter home! 🐇