

Habitat Conservation Area

A Self-Guided Interactive Tour Fall Activities

CACHE & SEEK

Materials: Popsicle sticks, markers

When the fall and winter months arrive, animals start preparing for the cooler months in various ways. Some hibernate, others may migrate and some stay in the same area. Those who choose to stay have various physical adaptations to assist in their survival. Some will grow a thicker coat, like Deer. Others, like Rabbits, will change the colour of their coat to camouflage with the snow so they are less noticeable by prey. Porcupines and Beavers are some species that store up food, gorging over the summer so they have fat reserves to rely on over the winter. Finally, Chickadees are one of the birds that will puff out its feathers, creating air pockets between each feather that will be heated by their body. This creates a blanket of warmth throughout the winter.

Besides physical adaptations, animals have also adapted different behaviors to help them survive in the different seasons. Some of the most common animal behavioral adaptations are food caching, shelter building, hibernation and migration. Due to the freezing winter temperatures, short days and plant scarcity, it is difficult for animals to find food in the winter. To deal with the lack of food availability, some animals hide and store food in a safe place that they can return to during the winter season. This is known as food caching or "hoarding." Food caching is very popular among bird species, such as; magpies, chickadees, woodpeckers and even with squirrels. Black-capped chickadees, surprisingly, can remember up to 85 food caches!

Do you think you can remember 85 food cache spots? Test your memory with a fun food caching game. All you need are a set of popsicle sticks. Remember how many popsicle sticks you began with and hide them in different hiding spots. Hide as many as you can. Afterwards, try and relocate them all and see if you are any match for the Black-Capped chickadee. With larger groups you can decorate your own popsicle stick with markers so you know exactly which cache is yours and which are your neighbouring Chickadees!