

Exploring the Bethpage State Park School Garden During the Winter Season

Even with flowers gone and insects “dormant” (inactive or in a deep sleep), there is still a lot to observe in this garden during the winter season.

In fact, seeing birds might be easier, with bare branches and no leaves on the trees. If there is snow on the ground, it might provide a light background to easily spot a fox or reveal the presence of one...with footprints!

You never know what you might see but the true trick is using **ALL** your senses - keep your eyes and ears open!

Plants and Insects

Task 1: Traces of what grows in spring and summer still linger in the garden during winter. Observe and document it!

Find a woody plant or remaining stalk in the garden. Draw it below

Does it have buds? Yes or No

Are there seeds still attached? Yes or No

What characteristics can you use to help identify this plant?

Do you believe that this plant could still serve a purpose to the habitat through winter?

Fun fact: Did you know that some insects will lay eggs before winter and protect them in a case called an “**ootheca**”. The praying mantis is an example of an insect that does this.

Other insects, such as spiders and wasps, will live in plant stems that remain in the garden! This is why it is important to leave the garden as it is, so that it could still provide **habitat** (a home) for life during the cold months.

Do you see any egg cases on the stalks left in the garden? If so, draw it! If not, draw what you think could be occupying the stems of dead plant life.

Birds

Task 2: Look for birds! Birds will most likely be feeding on what is left - this could be seeds that still remain in the garden or berries in the trees. With the leaves gone you might also see birds perching in trees or pecking the trunk for insects living inside.

Draw the bird you see and its behavior below!

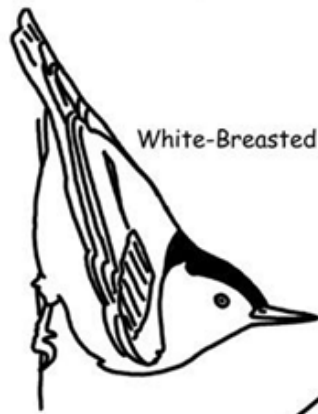
Was the bird moving? Yes or No

Was the bird alone? Yes or No

Was the bird eating? Yes or No

Write down some of the other things you observed about your bird below:

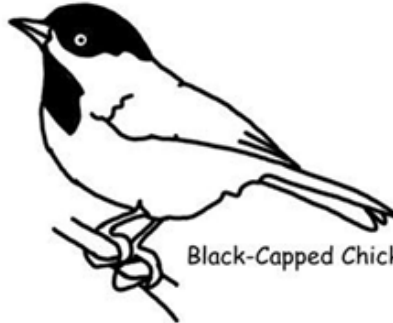
Task 2: Study these common winter birds. Notice their patterns and see if you can spot them in or around the garden. Feel free to color them in too!



White-Breasted Nuthatch



Downy Woodpecker



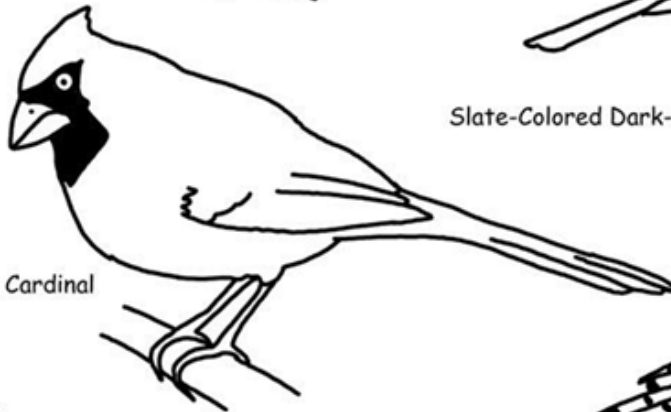
Black-Capped Chickadee



Tufted Titmouse



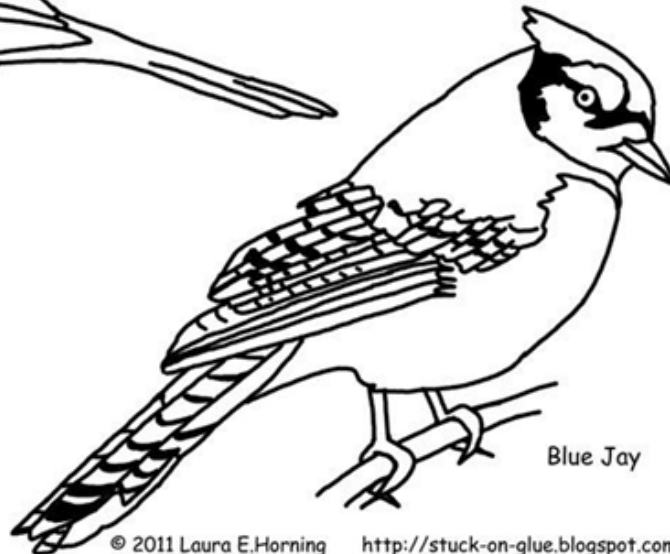
Slate-Colored Dark-Eyed Junco



Northern Cardinal



American Goldfinch



Blue Jay

Mammals and Their Tracks

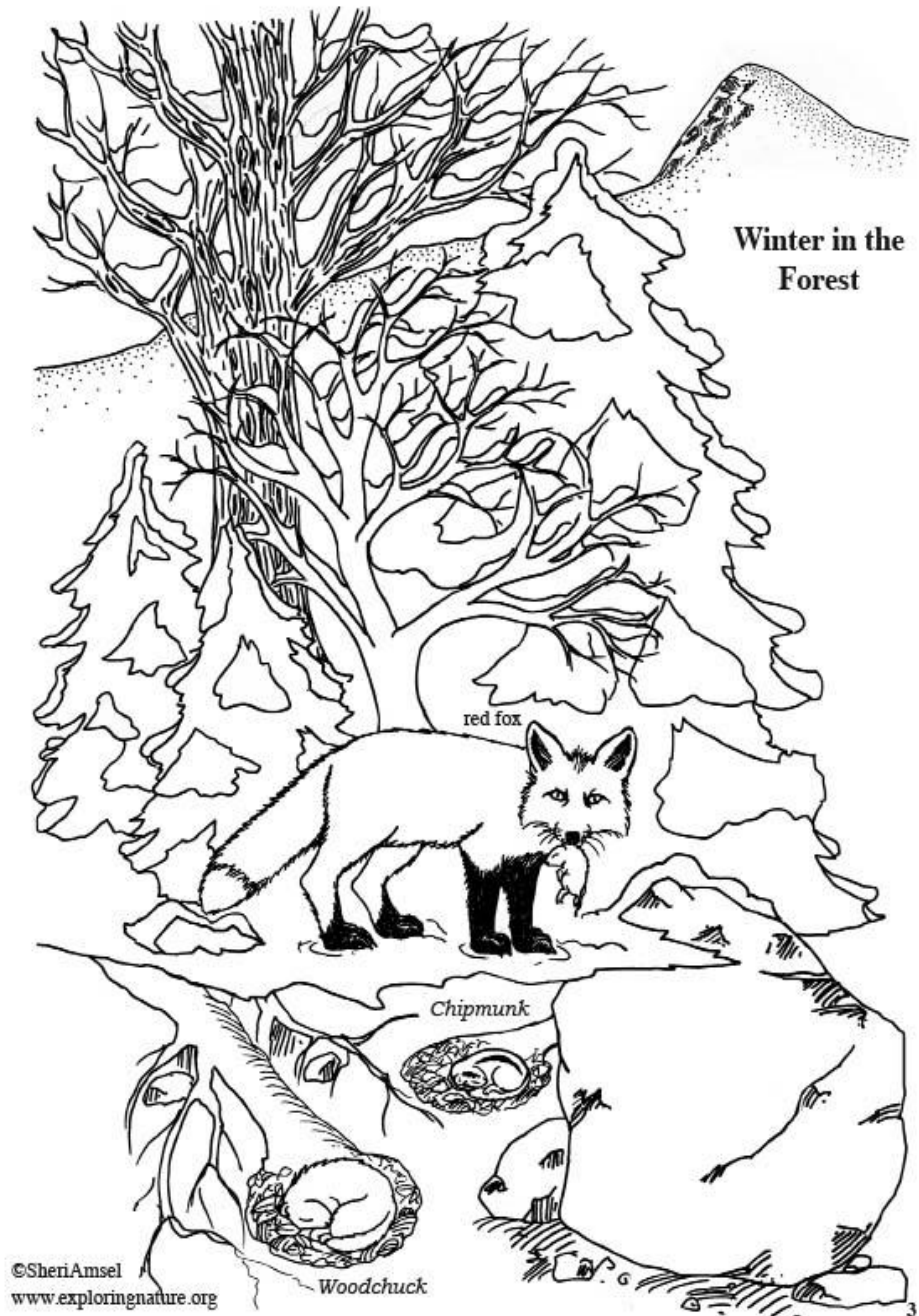
What is a mammal?

An animal that is warm-blooded and has the feature of hair or fur!

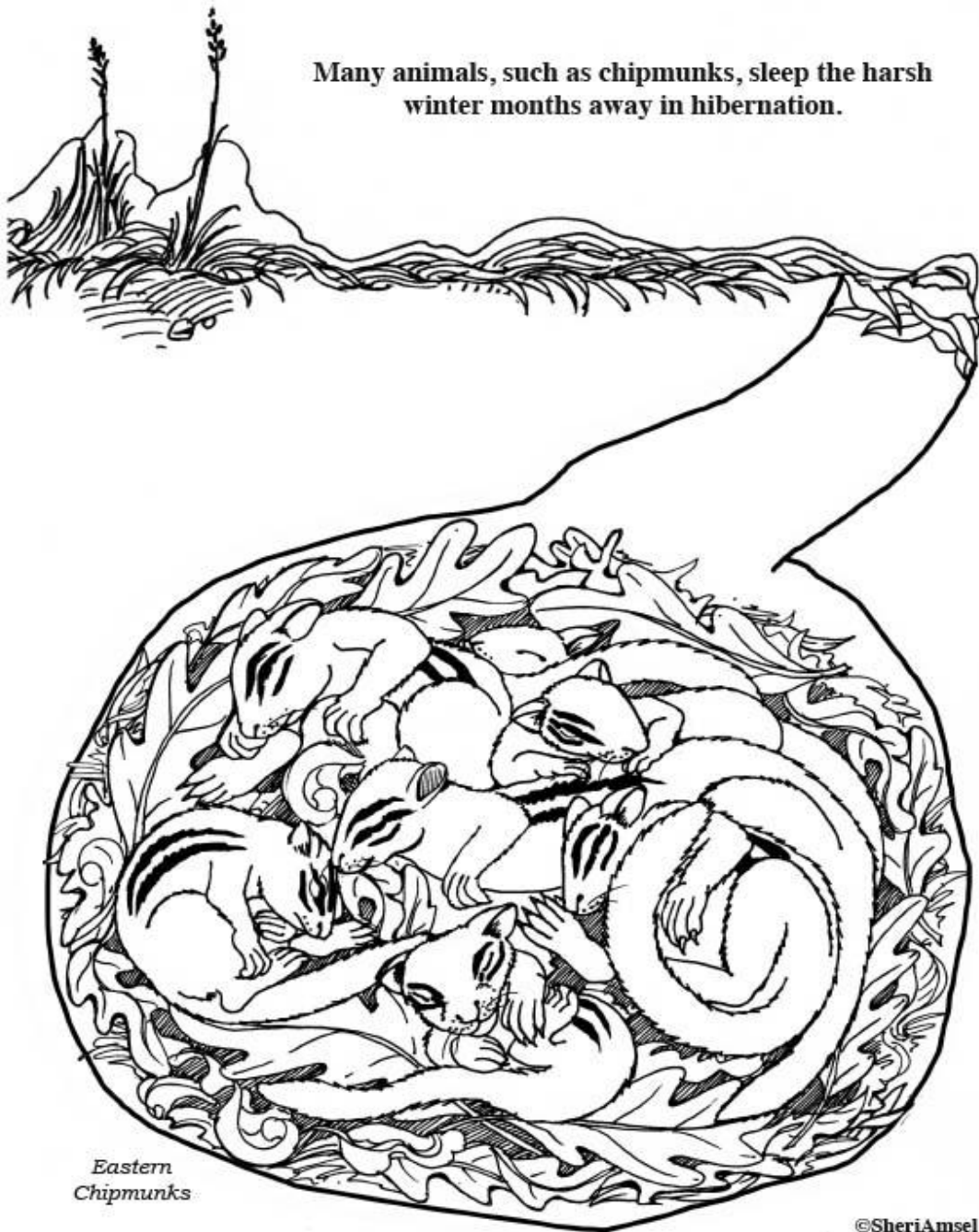
Examples of Mammals at Bethpage State Park

- Rabbits
- Foxes
- Mice
- Deer
- Raccoons
- Bats
- Squirrels
- Groundhog
- Chipmunks
- **HUMANS!**

It is true that some mammals are less active in winter but that does not mean they completely disappear!



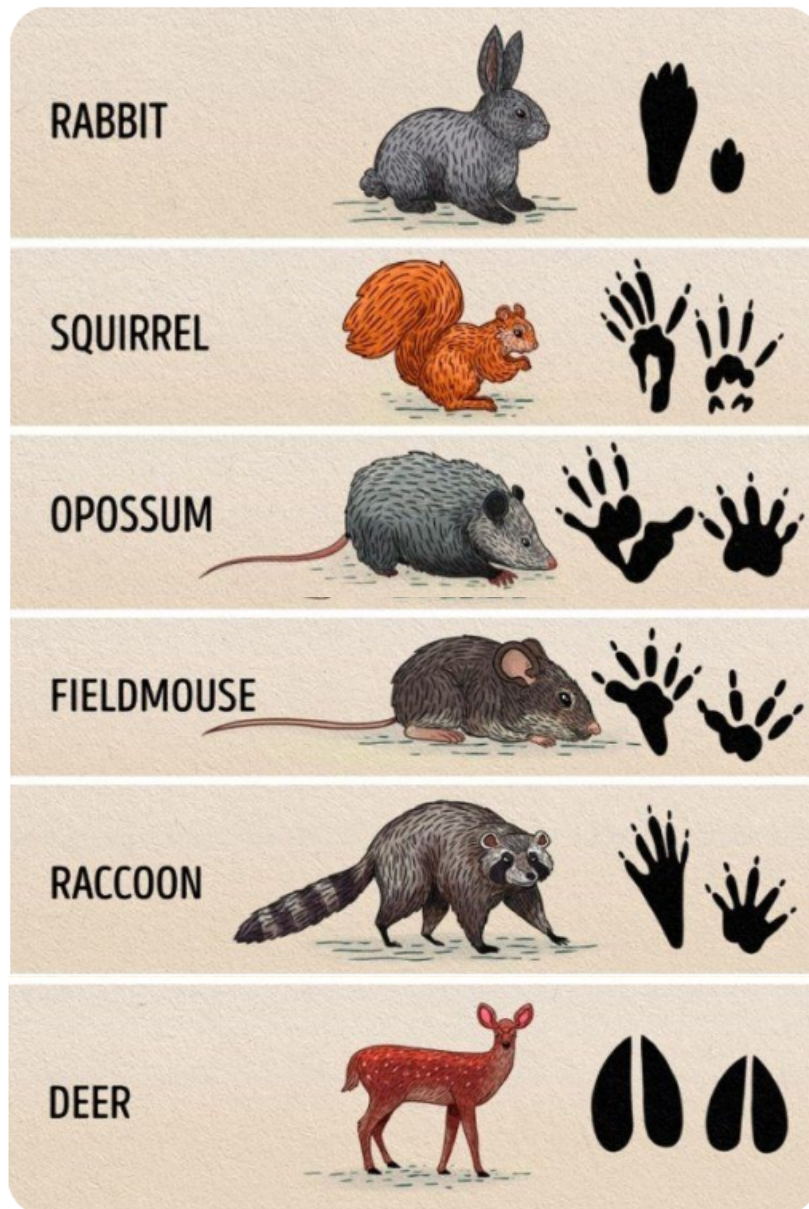
Many animals will create burrows under the ground or find holes in tree trunks and dead logs. These are all great locations to weather out the stormy winter months until spring arrives.



Other mammals have the ability to stay above ground because of special features that allow them to **adapt** to cold winter temperatures.

An example of an animal is the **Red Fox**, who grows a warmer coat to protect itself during the winter.

Task: A great way to see mammal activity this time of year is to look for tracks in the snow, ice or even mud. Each animal has a distinct footprint.



Familiarize yourself with the footprints above and then go on a hunt for some tracks. See what you can find and then draw it below.

Do you see more than one set of tracks? Yes or No

Do the footprints look old or new?

How does the size of the footprint you see compare to your own? Draw it!
