

Animals in Winter: How to Survive in Cold Climates

Adapted from *The Rainforest Site*,
<https://blog.therainforestsite.greatergood.com/cs-animals-cold-weather/>

Humans survive the cold often by staying inside and warming by fires, wearing warm clothing, and drinking hot cocoa. But animals that live in areas of harsh winter have to use other ways to survive. Arctic and subarctic animals have developed multiple ways to survive the most frigid and harshest winters. Here are 10 animals that thrive in extremely cold temperatures and snowy landscapes!

Musk Oxen

The outer layer of the musk ox covers up a second, insulating undercoat that helps the animal withstand the frigid Arctic winter. Musk oxen live mostly in Arctic Canada and Greenland, feeding on roots and moss. Their hooves are sharp for digging through snow and ice for food. They use their long, curved horns as a defense against predators. They group together, huddling close to stay warm and protect the herd from predators.



Arctic Hare

The Arctic hare's shorter ears help save body heat, and it has a thick fur coat to help keep it warm. It digs burrows underground to stay warm. They survive in the winter by digging plants out of the snow to

eat. Their fur changes color according to the seasons; they're white in the winter which helps camouflage them from their natural predators. Like musk oxen, they huddle together in groups for protection and warmth.



Snow Leopard

Snow leopards are known for their thick fur. They have a white, soft gray, or yellowish coat with spots of black on brown. The markings are their camouflage to help hide them from prey. Their thick coats, furry tails, and furry paws make snow leopards perfectly suited for the cold, dry mountains of Central Asia. This species is very endangered, with less than 7000 living in the wild.



Walrus

Walruses usually live at the North Pole in the shallow waters of the Arctic seas. They have large, blubbery bodies to keep warm in the freezing waters. This layer of fat keeps them warm. Walruses feed on shrimp, mollusks, and soft coral. They use their long tusks to make holes in the ice, as well as to help them climb up onto the ice.



Caribou

Did you know Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer was a caribou? Caribous live in the Arctic, subarctic, and mountainous regions of North America, Europe, and Siberia. Both males and females have large antlers. Their large, hollowed hooves grip to the ground, which helps them travel over the ice and dig through the snow. They also have two furry coats: one is a thick undercoat, and the other is a coat of long, hollow hairs.



Arctic Ground Squirrels

Arctic ground squirrels prepare for the cold by working on lining their burrows before the Arctic winter sets in. They use animal hair, lichens, leaves, and the ground to provide insulation for their long winter's nap. As the squirrel sleeps, the body temperature drops to just above freezing, and the heart rate slows down to save energy.



Gentoo Penguin

Gentoo penguins live on cliffs where their colonies can number in the thousands. They avoid the ice, but they are most at home in the water. These penguins are excellent divers, and can hold their breath for up to 7 minutes underwater! Natural predators in the water include leopard seals, sea lions, and orcas that hang out in the waters close to the gentoo penguin colonies.



