Animals in Winter Theme

Brrrrr.....it’s cold outside! We wear coats, gloves, hats and boots to keep warm, but what do the animals do? This month, we learned what happens to animals during the winter season.

We began our theme discussing what people do in the winter and then asked, “What do animals do in the winter?” During the first week, we focused on different kinds of bears and what they do in the winter. Some of the vocabulary words introduced included seasons, cave, burrow and den. Books that helped us learn about animals in winter and bears included, Animals in Winter by Henrietta Bancroft, Every Autumn Comes the Bear by Jim Arnosky, and Black Bear Cub by Alan Lind. We worked together to transform an area of the Green Room into a cave for animals to hibernate. We collaged a 9ft Grizzly bear with various materials. As we learned about the black bear, the children compared the size of their hand and the size of a black bear paw. As the week progressed, the children added pictures of different animals such as mice, fox, bears, and rabbits to the cave.

Next, we identified animals that hibernate, migrate and adapt during the winter months. Our focus animals this week were Hedgehogs and Bats. Animals Hibernating by Pamela Hickman, A Little Bit of Winter by Paul Stewart and Stellaluna by Janell Cannon enhanced our learning during the week. We created hanging bats using sewing skills and transformed model magic and toothpicks into hedgehogs. In the kitchen, we made bear claws using bread dough.

We traveled to the Arctic and Antarctic to discover the climate and the animals that live in those areas. Arctic Animals and Antarctic Animals both by Melvin Berger helped us identify the animals that are specific to each area. We worked together to create an 11 ft Polar bear using a LOT of white stuffing material! Polar bear, Polar bear, What do you Hear? by Eric Carle offered a writing prompt for the friends to create their own story.
Number recognition and counting skills were reinforced while playing the Penguin counting game, Tip Top Tally.

A closer look at birds in winter filled our last week. Books such as, *How Do Birds Find their Way?* by Roma Gans, *No Two Alike* by Keith Baker, and *Birds in Wintertime* by Allen Eitzen helped teach us about migration and different kinds of birds. The friends completed a multi step process of creating a unique bird. Our Dramatic Play Area became a birds’ nest for the “birds” to land and play a game, care for their young baby birds or look at a bird book. For the birds that do not migrate, we made bird feeders to help them survive the winter months.

As we explored animals in winter, our activities offered us opportunities to develop many skills. Tracing animals, writing animals’ names and weaving activities reinforced fine motor skills. Comparing and contrasting bear paws, animal tracks, Arctic/Antarctic animals and balancing games in the Science Center developed our cognitive skills of discovery and exploration. Our patterning skills grew while making bear patterns, and the Positions Game helped develop spatial relationships. Number recognition and counting skills were reinforced while playing Tip Top Tally and The Orchard Game. Creative writing stories about animals in winter enhanced our communication skills.
Birthday Celebrations and Special Visitors

This month we celebrated Lexi and Maggie’s Birthday along with Boden’s half birthday. We also had special visitors in the Green Room this month. Our thanks to Nicola Hine (Agatha) for teaching the afternoon friends French, Corrine Guillou (Felix) for our Friday morning French lessons and Miss Debbie from the Carnegie Library for sharing stories and songs about animals and winter.
Martin Luther King, Jr Day
On January 21, Miss Mangan’s friends participated in the activities offered at the University Center to honor Martin Luther King, Jr. They worked together to create a “peace sculpture”, sang songs and enjoyed a snack. The morning friends helped contribute peace doves and drawings of multicultural faces to add to the sculpture.

Good Bye to Miss Jeon!
During the last two weeks of January, the Green Room welcomed Jiwon Jeon (Jay). Miss Jeon is a practicum student from Duksung Women’s University. Miss Jeon developed meaningful, cultural lessons that she shared with Mrs Opferman’s and Miss Mangan’s circle time friends. She also led activities that involved all of the Green Room friends. The friends especially enjoyed creating traditional Korean fans and learning a traditional Korean game called The Four Gates, which is similar to London Bridge.