ANIMALS IN WINTER

Returning to school from winter break, we started our new theme of Animals In Winter. Brrr….. It is cold outside! People 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.

We began our theme by discussing the new year. January is the first month of the year, and winter is one of four seasons. Next, we discussed what people do in the winter and how the environment changes. During the first week, the friends created locker tags by drawing or tracing with animal stencils and labeled their picture by writing the name of the animal. The children traced circles and then cut them to make imaginary animals and snow people to make the Green Room look like winter. In the Discovery Area, the friends created a winter mural with trees, snow and animals. The friends learned about symmetry by designing their own mittens. The children investigated aspects of winter weather, such as temperature and wind.
It’s cold outside, but that does not slow down some animals in Pittsburgh. Some animals remain and stay active in winter. They must adapt to the changing weather. The children learned that squirrels, birds, mice, rabbits, and deer must adapt to the changing weather. Many make changes in their behavior or bodies. Food is hard to find in winter. We learned about how some animals prepare for winter by eating extra food and storing it as body fat. Some also store food like nuts or acorns to eat later in winter. To keep warm, animals may grow thicker fur. On weasels and snowshoe rabbits, the new fur is white to help them hide in the snow. Fish swim into deeper, warmer water.
Next, we turned our focus to **BEARS**. In the winter, when there is not a lot of food to eat, bears spend most of their time sleeping in **dens**. The children learned that dens are places that help shelter bears from the cold wind, rain and snow. Bears den in hollow trees, small caves and under fallen trees. To get ready for their winter sleep, or **hibernation**, bears eat lots of food in the fall. They eat **plants** and **meat**. It was interesting for us to find out that, in Pennsylvania, the only bears that live in the wild are black bears. **Polar Bears** live in the **Arctic** and they are considered a **marine** animal.

Here, the afternoon friends compared paw prints of different animals during circle time.

The Build A Bear Workshop is where Jack made a bear by putting its body parts together with a hole punch and paper fasteners. Then he used crayons to color his bear.

Chudi and Josie made a bear paw from bread dough and a filling made of butter, brown sugar, chocolate chips and honey. Everyone enjoyed eating them for snack!

Evren experimented by putting his hand in a Zip Lock bag with Crisco and a bowl of ice showed how the blubber keeps bears warm in the cold weather.

Chudi used a ruler to measure the difference in size between his foot and a bear paw.

Henry built a den to protect the animals he was playing with from the winter cold.

John played a number game with a variety of winter themed items and rolling a number die.

Yerick and Dean used tree blocks and stones to build caves for animals.
Welcome to Polar Bear Country! To see a polar bear living in the wild, the children learned that they would have to travel to the top of the world - the North Pole area. Weather in this northern region would be dreadfully cold and windy for humans, but polar bears love it! Polar bears choose these icy areas to live because this is where seals live and seal blubber is their favorite food. Some of the other polar bear facts we learned are: A polar bear is the largest member of the bear family; it is one of the biggest and strongest animals in the world; a polar bear’s paw is as big as a dinner plate; the pad on the paw keeps it from slipping on the ice; polar bears learn to eat by watching their mothers; a polar bear’s thick layer of blubber and fur protects it from the cold; only polar bears who are going to have cubs hibernate through the winter; the polar bear is a great swimmer; a polar bear is a carnivore, meaning it eats meat. Did you know that a Polar Bear’s skin is black and the hair is transparent (clear)? The hair looks white because of the way the sun reflects light on it.
As we progressed learning about animals in winter, the Arctic and Antarctic, we ended our unit by introducing **penguins**. We looked at a globe of the earth to see that penguins live in the southern half of the earth. The children learned that penguins are **flightless birds**. While other birds have **wings** for flying, penguins have adapted **flippers** to help them swim in water. Penguins catch their food in the water using their **beaks**. The largest penguins are the **Emperor Penguin**. An Animals In Winter scavenger hunt was lots of fun! We had an indoor snowball throw through a pretend snowman made out of hoops, and we played winter-themed board games. On the snowy days, we had a lot of fun playing in the snow!

These friends were proud to complete the snake floor puzzle.

Max and Josie sketched a penguin.

Julia was pleased to complete the polar bear puzzle with Josie.

Adding and subtracting by playing the Tip Top Tally game.

Yerick and Josie played Penguin Math.

Pretending to be Inuits and playing with Arctic animals, igloos and dog sleighs.

The Arctic was represented at the light table. Harris and Elijah set the scene with the props.

Lillian and Evren were busy making marshmallow igloos.

Maren and Alisa had a blast sliding on the snow!

Addison and Sydnee climbed a mountain of snow!

Jack shoveled snow to clear the path on our playground.
As we explored animals in winter, Chris Kubiak, from the Audubon Society and Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve enhanced our theme by helping us understand how birds and monarch butterflies fly south to warmer weather. The children learned another new big word - **migration**. Mr. Kubiak taught us that a Bull Frog can freeze solid and survive winter by diving through water and burying itself in mud! He also showed us animal skins and explained how fur keeps animals warm. We also had the opportunity to see a live **Screech Owl** and hear a variety of bird sounds! Mrs. Hraber taught us songs about hibernation and squirrels, and she taught us that instead of reading the story **The Mitten** we could sing it! She also gave us opportunities to play instruments. Debbie Priore from the Carnegie Library read a variety of fun books about animals in winter. Miss Na Hyun Lee from Duksung Women’s University spent two weeks with us. She taught us a traditional Korean song while we had fun free dancing to music! The children saw what their name looked like written in Korean and tried to copy the Korean characters in sand, along with other activities.

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**Celebrating Birthdays**

Josh celebrated his birthday with his parents by reading one of his favorite stories.

Addison’s parents visited school for her birthday and read a book to her class.

Maya’s mom and sister (Ruby, a Children’s School Alumni) read a book to celebrate Maya’s half birthday.

Adrian’s mom celebrated his birthday by reading a favorite book to his class in Mrs. Bird’s circle.

Maren’s parents celebrated her birthday by reading a book to her circle time group.
The Make Shop focus in January was all about magnets and woodworking tools. Using magnetic rings, the children tried to match what they saw on cards. The rings must be the exact same color and order as shown on the card. If the card shows rings that are floating (not touching), their rings must be floating. The children learned that to make the rings float, you must use the basic rule of magnetism that like (same) poles repel or push apart and opposite (different) poles attract or pull together. Each magnetic ring has a positive (+) and negative (-) side. To change the pole on a ring, we learned to just flip it over. We ended the month in the Make Shop by moving our woodworking bench and tools. There we practiced drilling holes, hammering nails into a tree trunk and learning how to use a saw. Everybody loves the Make Shop!