

# Snow Walkers

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Grade Levels: 4-12

## In a Nutshell

Students learn about (and use, if weather permits) snowshoes to explore the concept of “adaptation.” They learn that many animals are adapted to the winter environment.

## Objectives

After completing this unit, the students will be able to

- Explain the purpose of using snowshoes (increasing surface area to help support weight);
- List at least two animals that are adapted for moving snow;
- List at least four types of “signs” that can be used to determine what kinds of animals are in an area;
- Describe at least four different adaptation which enable animals to survive the winter;
- Demonstrate the proper use of snowshoes (if weather permits).

# Snow Walkers Pre-visit Activities

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*The following materials are aids to help prepare your students for their visit to the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station. The vocabulary list contains terms and concepts your students will encounter in their first visit. Please modify the definitions as needed. The activities listed below are merely options- it is not necessary to do them all or to follow any particular order. Keep in mind that your students' learning experiences at CWES will be enhanced if they are familiar with these concepts and terms prior to the on-site activities.*

## Vocabulary

Adaptation:	a physical or behavioral characteristic that helps an animal survive in its environment
Environment:	all of the surroundings of an organism, living and nonliving
Habitat:	the place where an animal lives and its needs for life met
Snowshoe:	a light frame of wood or other material strung with thongs that is worn under the shoe to prevent sinking down in the snow

## Activity #1

Have each student pick on Wisconsin animal- a mammal, bird, fish, reptile or amphibian in which they are interested. Prepare a report on that animal to find out (1) any preparations the animal makes for winter, (2) where it spends the winter, and (3) what it does during the winter. The report should include a crayon or pencil drawing of the animal. Have each student present their findings to the class. Then post the pictures and reports on the bulletin board for everyone's benefit. Ask the students, "Which animals might we see signs of at the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station?"

## Activity #2

Discuss some ways that humans survive winter conditions. Read a chapter or more of Farley Mowat's book *The Snowwalkers, or Traps North* by Stephen Meader. Encourage the students to write their own essay about snowshoeing in the far north.

## Activity #3

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Read parts of Jack London's *Call of the Wild* or *White Fang* about life in harsh climates to the class. Ask students to discuss some of the ways that the characters in the book survived the winters. Have the students write a story about winter. Here are some questions to get them started:

- Where is the story taking place?
- Describe the main character?
- What do they like doing in winter?
- What do they love most about winter?
- What do they think is the hardest part of winter?

# Snow Walkers Post-visit Activities

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*A visit to the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station can be a school-year highlight for both students and their educators. We feel the knowledge and concepts gained during a Station visit apply outside the Station as well. The following activities will allow students to expand their knowledge and help them incorporate those lessons into their everyday lives. Feel free to pick from and modify the activities as best suits your group.*

## Activity #1

Ask the students what their preferred mode of winter travel is: snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, or snowmobiling. When all of the students have answered, ask for at least three reasons to support their preferences.

Announce that they will prepare to have a team debate on the pros and cons of each sport, considering environmental consequences, costs of the sport, potential restrictions needed, amount of fun and freedom, etc. Each team will present a brief history of their sport and its pros and cons. Give the teams time to collect information.

On the day of the debate, have each team present their sport's history. Then give the teams time to debate the pros and cons of each sport. Has anyone changed their mind about their preferred mode of winter travel?

## Activity #2

Have the students' research and discuss the differences in winter adaptations for animals living in aquatic environments versus those that inhabit terrestrial environments. Have the students write short reports about these differences and include illustrations.

## Activity #3

The Eskimos were some of the last North Country peoples to use snowshoes, yet they inhabit areas with lots of snow. Explore how the Eskimos got around before they advent of snowshoes and how they adapted their lifestyles to survive the very long winters of Alaska and northern Canada.

# Snow Walkers Resources

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## Teacher Resources

Cox, Gerald. *Wintersigns in the Snow*. New York: Michael Kesend Publishing Ltd., 1975. 80pp.

Edwards, Sally. *Snowshoeing*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1995. 122pp.

London, Jonathon. *Let the Lynx Come In*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 1996.

Osgood, William E., and Leslie Hurley. *The Snowshoe Book*. Brattleboro, VT: S. Greene Press, 1975. 163pp.

## Children's Literature

Rockwell, Anne F. *The First Snowfall*. New York: Aladdin Books, 1992.

San Souci, Daniel. *North Country Night*. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

Williams, Terry Tempest, and Ted Major. *The Secret Language of Snow*. San Francisco: Sierra Club/ Pantheon Books, 1984. 129pp.