



Litchfield

Wetland Management District | Minnesota



A UNIT OF THE
National Wildlife
Refuge System

Surviving the Winter Months

As winter weather surrounds us, we have the ability to stay indoors where we can enjoy heat, warm food and safety. It is easy to forget that wildlife cannot do the same! How do different animals survive and find food in these frigid temperatures?



Pintails migrating south for the winter.



Barred Owl



Northern Cardinal

Some birds live in the same area all year.

Winter Strategies

- ◆ Migration - fly south to find food and stay warm (many birds, insects)
- ◆ Hibernation - eat a lot in fall, sleep through most of winter in a warm den (amphibians, some mammals, some insects)
- ◆ Torpor - let body temperature decrease, warm up when they must eat (small mammals, some birds)
- ◆ Brumation - metabolism slows drastically, inactive in winter, do not eat (reptiles & amphibians)
- ◆ Keep moving (some mammals, some birds, fish)
- ◆ Antifreeze - make antifreeze proteins to keep body fluids from freezing (some insects, some frogs)

Main Winter Challenges

- Low food resources
- Cold temperatures require more energy to stay warm
- Must find safe place to sleep, hibernate, torpor
- Bare trees and snow do not provide many hiding places for foraging animals



White-Tailed Deer



Big Brown Bat

Moving to stay warm v. Resting in torpor state



Coyote searching for its next meal.

When can I see high species diversity?

The best time to see many bird species is during spring migration. Birds common to this area will arrive and birds that nest in Canada will pass through.

For many other wildlife species, late spring through early fall is a good window for spotting different species out and about. Grab a pair of binoculars, take a quiet hike, and keep your eyes open for wildlife!