



Updates from the Trail: January 2022

Surviving Winter in your backyard

Although 40% of birds and even monarch butterflies fly South to vacation on the beach in the winter, it's a perilous journey that most insects and animals forgo. While we will throw another coat on and turn the heat up when the temperatures dip, animals and insects have developed their own strategies to cope. What we do in our gardens can be critical to their winter survival.

Birds, rabbits, and squirrels hunker down in tree cavities, brush piles, or in down logs. Most insects overwinter in leaf litter as larvae and replace the water in their bodies with glycerol, a type of antifreeze. Bees nest in cavities of rock walls, underground, or in bunch grasses. Some, like carpenter bees, live in wildflower stems as larvae.

Cardinals puff out their feathers to minimize heat loss, while geese grow an extra set of feathers for insulation. Other birds like chickadees put on insulating fat to fight the cold. High fat berries, like those of poison ivy, Holly trees, or the seeds from grasses like little bluestem, are critical.

Gray squirrels hoard their stash of acorns but scatter it throughout their territory to throw off food thieves. The seeds and acorns the squirrels don't eat and forget about, grow the next generation of trees in the forest.

As a Trust, we are changing the meadow mowing schedule and protocol to better reflect the needs of wildlife. Leaving the Eddy Sisters and Windmill Meadows fields un-mowed until the spring provides wildlife food and shelter. Our backyards and gardens can become an oasis for wildlife fighting through the winter as well. Leaving the leaves in garden beds and under trees, or keeping flower stems uncut provides

valuable nesting habitat. Planting native plants in your garden will provide needed high fat sources of food that invasive and non-native plants don't. As climate change drastically alters weather patterns, wildlife will need all the help it can get, and small changes can have large impacts.



A coyote trots along the driveway at the Hay Conservation Center. As prey becomes scarce in the winter, coyotes' diet will shift and will include more plants like native grasses.



Volunteers Chris Williams, Daniel Johnson, and Alice Ardito scope out a place for flagging while Vince takes GPS coordinates of a boundary of BCT 186 Baldwin. 1/27/2022