



# WINTER ACTIVITIES



Photo © Phil Doyle

**Don't let the cold keep you indoors! Winter offers plenty of fun ways to play in nature. So bundle up and try these 10 winter-themed nature play activities to get you started.**

We've broken them into two main categories of play, Unstructured, which is directed by the kids themselves but with support from adults for safety. Structured, which includes kids following instructions and goals for activity, with support from adults for safety.

Keep an eye on [massaudubon.org/natureplay](https://massaudubon.org/natureplay) or Mass Audubon's social media channels for videos that will showcase these ideas. And if you do any of these activities share photos with us by tagging us on social media or emailing [education@massaudubon.org](mailto:education@massaudubon.org).

## Make Snow Animals

Next time it snows, skip the snow people and try snow animals instead! You could make a whale, a bird, or even a family of bunnies. If you are feeling extra motivated, try to make a scene (or habitat) with many animals living together.



## Tracks in the Snow

Ever wonder what wildlife passes through your neighborhood, local park, or nearby wildlife sanctuary? Next time it snows, go out and look for tracks! Some common tracks you may find are bunnies, turkeys, or deer. After looking for wildlife tracks, get creative and make your own in a variety of shapes and patterns. You can design crazy prints on cardboard and attach to your boots before heading outdoors. Bring a field guide if you like, to help identify the tracks!

## Build a Snow Slide

Who needs a hill when you can make your own slide! After the next big snowstorm hits, use a shovel to make a huge pile of snow. Shape the pile into a slide. You can even make the slide longer into a luge or track for your sled to follow.

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## Go on an Iceberg River Race

Take a family hike to a location that has a stream, brook, or small river. Ideally the body of water will have chunks of snow or ice along the edge to break off, but as a back-up you can bring ice cubes from your home freezer. Have each member of your family place a chunk of ice or snow (your “icebergs”) in the river at the same time. Pick a “finish line” and see whose iceberg crosses first. Spice up the game by adding your own rules. For example, your iceberg can only be as big as an apple, or each person has 10 minutes to carve their iceberg into an ice boat using a rock or sticks.

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## Create a Lifesize Bird's Nest



Ever wonder what it's like to be a bird? Here's your chance! Collect sticks of varying sizes and arrange them on top of one another in a large circle. As you build the layers of sticks up, imagine you are a large bird of prey (like a Bald Eagle or Osprey) who have been known to build nests up to 3 feet wide and 5 feet deep, big enough to fit you! Once you are done, sit in the nest, flap your wings, and see how many chicks you could fit in your life-sized bird's nest. If making a nest in a park or wildlife sanctuary, leave no trace by taking it apart when you are done.

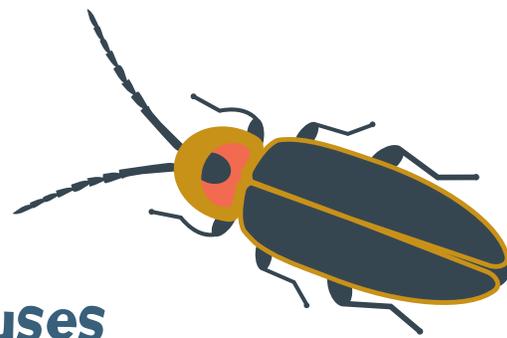
## Treats for the Birds

You don't need a bird feeder to attract birds! You can make treats using simple ingredients found in your refrigerator, pantry, and junk drawer! One way is to string popcorn and fruits onto string and hang in the trees outside a window. Another option: Build a snowperson and add nuts, fruits, veggies, and bird seed for the animals to eat over time. Take notes on what kinds of birds eat your creations.



## Paint the Snow

Liven up that white landscape with a little color! First, combine one-part non-toxic tempera paint or food coloring to 10 parts water (add more paint for more intense color) in a spray bottle (one for each color). Go outside with your colored spray bottles and create fun, uplifting snow paintings in the snow for others to see. (Just be sure to ask permission if doing this beyond your own property).



## Winter Bug Houses

While many bugs are burrowed underground for the winter, you can build them a house to use when they reemerge in the spring. Use sticks, leaves, and loose dirt to create your perfect bug cottage, or full-sized mansion. Check back on your created bug home in the spring to see if any little crawlers have moved in!

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## Build a Snow Castle

Your fortress awaits! Grab as many things as possible to help build your snow castle such as buckets, odd-shaped containers, shovels of different sizes, and spoons and forks for carving details. Start by making a large mound of snow or by filling your containers with snow to make "building blocks." Shape your castle/fort out of the snow and blocks from the various containers, being as imaginative and creative as you can. Can you think of any games to play using your castle?

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## Make Ice Balloons

Using a few squirts of non-toxic tempera paint or food coloring, fill a series of balloons, containers, or zany ice cube shape trays with a paint/water solution of various colors, as you would if you were making water balloons. If temperatures will drop below freezing, place the colored water filled balloons or containers outside overnight. Once frozen, remove from container or peel balloon off the ice sphere and decorate your yard with frozen sculptures. Notice what happens when the sun shines on them!