



SNOW IS VITAL

to Wyoming Wildlife

LITTLE WYOMING

Snowy Blanket

The surface of snow may be cold to the touch, but for the animals that spend their winters hibernating in underground burrows, the layers of snow above them act like a cozy blanket. That's because snow is composed of many individual snowflakes, and the space between those snowflakes form pockets of trapped air that are warmer than the outside air. There has to be at least one foot of snow in order for it to provide insulation to the soil and organisms below.

Snow = Winter's VIP

Winter can be a tough season for many plants and animals. Food can be scarce, travel through deep snow can be difficult and exhausting, and staying warm can be a challenge. Plants and animals that live in places where it snows, like in Wyoming, have adaptations that help them survive this tough time of year. In many cases, the winter survival of these plants and animals is now dependent on snow!

Snowmelt's Importance

Snow is also vital to Wyoming's ecosystems after it melts! Snowmelt provides valuable moisture to the soil that helps plants grow abundantly, which Wyoming's herbivores depend on. When snow melts, it also fills our rivers, lakes and reservoirs. Along with providing much-needed water to downstream areas, snowmelt that enters rivers and streams can provide additional spawning habitat for native fish.



Winter's White Backdrop

In the summer, white-tailed jackrabbits have dusty brown fur, which helps these animals blend in with the dusty brown soil that covers the prairies and plains.

But when these prairies and plains are instead covered in snow during the winter, a jackrabbit with a dusty brown coat would be easy pickings for predators! White-tailed jackrabbits are one of several mammal species whose fur color shifts to white during the winter to provide camouflage in the snow.