

Where do insects go for the winter?

That all depends on the insect.

To understand how insects live through the blustery days of winter, first you need to know how they live their lives. Some insects, such as beetles and butterflies, go through what is called a complete life cycle. That means they start as eggs, change to larvae, then pupae, and finally change into adults. Other insects, such as the walkingstick, go through an incomplete life cycle of egg, nymph, and adult.

Some insects, like the gypsy moth, the walkingstick, and the corn root worm, live through winter as eggs. Their parents made the nest in a protected place—often in the soil—so the eggs could survive the cold.

Other insects are in the larval form by the time winter arrives. These insects, which include beetle grubs, escape the cold by digging deep into the soil. Some butterflies, on the other hand, make their cocoons in a tree, then go into the pupae stage. When it warms the following spring, the butterfly changes to its adult form and flies out of the cocoon.

Finally, some insects—such as the lady beetle, mourning cloak butterfly, leaf-footed pine bug, and box elder bug—get through winter as adults. In late fall, they find a protected place away from winds and rain. Ideal spots include under logs, in leaf litter, or even inside your home. That's right; your attic is a great winter destination for some insects.

To find an insect's winter nesting site, keep your eyes open as you explore the outdoors. Look under logs and rocks and poke through leaf litter—you never know what you might find!

Winter Notes

- Insects that sleep or develop eggs during winter are dormant. Define *dormant* in your own words.
- Insects follow instincts to protect themselves and their offspring from cold weather. Instincts are reactions they know from the time they are born. If it snowed where you live, what would be your instinct?
- How do animals and birds survive during cold winters? How do people survive during cold winters?
- We may not see insects often in winter, but they are still alive. List other things that seem to disappear until the weather is warm.

(Note: Content for this passage first appeared in "Smart Stuff with Twig Walkingstick," created by the Ohio State University College of Food, Agriculture, and Environmental Science. You can find more articles like this at the following Web site: <http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~news/archive.php?series=science>)

Hot Links

Want to learn more about insects? Can't tell one bug from another? Then you might want to take a look at the following Web sites.

<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/bugs>

<http://www.whatsthatbug.com>

ecslarningsystems.com • novelunits.com • testsmart.com
800.688.3224

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