

Penelope the Porcupine Goes Looking For Spring

Place-based Ecology and Natural History: There are many references in this story to the ecological connections among plants and animals in Maine, regarding food sources. There is also information about animal homes and preferred environments, behaviors, adaptations, tracks and gaits, technical terms like crop and quill, and facts such as bats having fur (not feathers) and porcupines pooping a lot! Seasonal change is at the heart of the story - the physical changes and the emotional ones that often accompany the transition from winter to spring in New England. For young children understanding that just because a plant looks dead, doesn't mean it is, is a big concept! It is also a central point within the story and strategies to detect dead verses alive are shared: looking for buds and "the secret green."

Explore:

- Look for signs of spring outdoors in your yard or on a hike.
- Bring branches inside to force bloom like forsythia and apple.
- Imagine that something in nature (i.e. a cave with icicles, a stump, etc.) is a creature - make it come to life as a character of the forest - and tell each other a story about it.
- Walk quietly down a woods path and observe any birds you flush out from the undergrowth.
- Choose an animal that lives in our local place and learn more about them - what do they eat? What do their tracks look like? How do they behave with other animals? What time of day or year will you most likely see them?

Reflect and Share: Learners can reflect on how they are feeling at this time of year. They can explore outdoors and then share what signs of spring they find.

Photos:



| porcupine



skunk



grouse