

How Rabbits Got White Fur in Winter

THERE WAS ONCE a time when rabbits had to hide in their dens all winter long. When the white snow fell from the sky and the whole land was covered, the little brown rabbits had to quickly dash underground so that their brown bodies didn't stand out against the white snow and be seen by the hungry fox!

One winter Father Rabbit did not have enough food to feed his babies. They had run out of their winter store of dried clover, and he was worried they would starve.

One night when the moon was full he decided to leave his den and search for twigs for dinner. He went out bravely, sinking into the snow drifts, and looking all around worried that his brown fur would attract the eye of predators. What he didn't know was that two red fox had already spied him and were arguing behind a tree about who was going to eat him for a midnight snack!

Father Rabbit suddenly stumbled upon a tiny bird, the smallest bird of the northern forest. It was a golden crowned kinglet. It was called this because the tiny feathers on the top of its tiny head were the color of a golden sunset. Father Rabbit helped the bird out of the snow and realized it was shivering. He pulled some of his warm fur out of his hide and gave it to the birds saying, "go line your nest with this fur, it will keep you warm." In return, the golden crowned kinglet said, "I know why you are out on this cold night. You will find what you need in the cedar swamp." So Father Rabbit hurried to the swamp and this is what he found ...

A wise old beaver sitting on a log in the middle of the swamp. "I know why you are here," Wise Old Beaver said, and she lifted a tall birch staff and struck the frozen water. Suddenly a bright glow of light rose up and filled the forest. Father Rabbit looked down at himself and was amazed. His brown fur had vanished and in its place he wore a beautiful snow white coat. Now the foxes would never see him! His feet had also grown, and he could now walk on top of the snow and pack it down. He thanked the wise old beaver. Father Rabbit could run through the forest and find food for his children even in the winter time with his new white fur coat!

This is how rabbits came to have white fur in the winter. And now, every spring, they shed their winter coat and grow back their brown fur for the summer, and the golden crowned kinglets use the white fur that has been shed to line their nests so that their eggs stay warm until they hatch.

THE END

By Landere Naisbitt, BHHT Outreach Coordinator

