

It's winter!

Winter in the Chicago region means cold temperatures and short daylight hours, and yet nature persists. Look for overwintering birds and evidence of wildlife tracks. Wearing warm layers, you too can still explore the outdoors. Now is time to plan your garden... spring is on the horizon.

This field guide will help you get to know the plants and animals that are also spending winter in your Chicago neighborhood. These are just a few of the many birds, mammals, insects, trees, spiders and more that live in backyards, under logs, in gardens, and in nearby parks or forest preserves. Learn their common names in both English and Spanish, and their scientific names too!



Crab Apple Fruit

Árbol de manzano silvestre con fruta
Malus sylvestris

Many shrubs hold on to their fruit through the winter providing much needed food for our birds.



Goldenrod Gall

Agalla de vara de oro
Eurosta solidaginis

The goldenrod gall fly's eggs are inserted in the stem of goldenrod (*Solidago*), creating a spherical growth called a gall. Adult flies emerge in spring.



Oak Leaf

Hoja de Roble
Quercus

Big bold branches sometimes hang on to dry leaves and offer leaves for squirrel nests.



Black-Capped Chickadee

Carbonero de capucha negra
Poecile atricapillus

This widespread little bird with its black cap and chin is a lively presence at birdfeeders. Listen for its "chick-a-dee-dee-dee-dee" call.



Northern Cardinal (male)

Cardenal norteño
Cardinalis cardinalis

The bright red color and "Birdie, Birdie" calls of the year-round backyard cardinal can brighten even the dreariest winter day.



American Crow

Cuervo Norteamericano
Corvus brachyrhynchos

Quite intelligent and vocal with over 20 distinct calls, including the common "caw." These larger birds gather together in communal roosts.



Dark-Eyed Junco

Junco pizarroso
Junco hyemalis

Look for them on walks in the woods or at birdfeeders. They appear as winter sets in and retreat to the north come spring.



Downy Woodpecker

Carpintero peludo
Dryobates pubescens

Look for a cute little bundle of fluff inspecting tree trunks for insects and listen for their "tap tap tap".



House Sparrow (female)

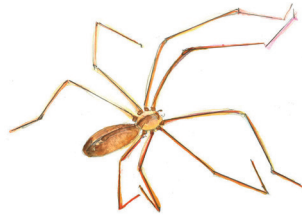
Gorrión común
Passer domesticus

Not originally native to North America, they are now a year-round resident and are a constant presence near homes.



Box Elder Bug
Chinche del arce
Boisea trivittata

They feed in Maples and enter our homes looking for a warm place to wait out the winter.



Daddy Longlegs
Araña de patas largas
Pholcidae

Called harvestmen, they are harmless to us and will run away. Their eggs survive over winter in the soil.



Lady Beetle
Catarina
Coccinellidae

Sometimes called ladybugs, these beetles feed on aphids both as larvae and adults and like to overwinter in houses.



Roly Poly or Pillbug
Cochinilla
Armadillidiidae

Not all can roll up into a ball. They live in cool, dark, moist places and feed on plants, usually dead.



Woolly Bear Caterpillar
Oruga oso lanudo
Pyrrharctia isabella

Curled up, waiting for spring, these fuzzy caterpillars almost freeze solid during hibernation and will grow into the Isabella Tiger Moths.



Turkey Tail fungus
Hongo cola de pavo
Trametes versicolor

A delight to find in winter. One of our most common fungi, it grows in big clusters on rotting wood, turning it into soil.



Mouse Tracks in Snow
Huellas de ratón en el nieve
Check out the surface of fresh snow. See if you can determine who has visited!

Go, explore!

Keep your eyes open for wildlife on walks in your neighborhood. See for yourself what critters are out there. Ask a trusted adult to take you to a park or nature center.

Draw your own observations of nature and what's around you! Don't forget to record Date, Location, Time, and Weather!

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The Chicagoland area is the traditional homelands of the Three Fires Confederacy: Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi. The area was also a site of trade, gathering and healing for more than a dozen other Native tribes. Respect and gratitude to the diverse Indigenous people that still reside here and across the region, as well as their ancestors.

