

# EXPLORE

GRACE LAKE BOARDWALK  
& TRAIL

*A guide*  
**FOR TEACHERS**



# USING THIS GUIDE

This guide is meant as a complement to your class's visit to the Grace Lake Boardwalk and Trail. It consists of a series of reproducible worksheets aimed at learners in kindergarten through grade 12. The activities can be used at any phase of lesson development, including the activating/mind's on stage, during a class tour, and/or as assessment.

## Visiting Grace Lake Boardwalk and Trail with your class

The Grace Lake Boardwalk and Trail is a self-guiding walking trail on Grace Lake. It consists of a floating board walk that connects with a land-based trail/walking path. The trail includes a viewing platform and a series of informational panels. It is located at Grace Lake, about 3 km east of the The Pas.

## Find us online and on the ground



Visit us at

<https://www.facebook.com/OpasquiaTrails>



[Click to access directions](#)



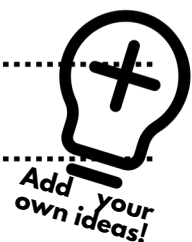
# LEAVE IT BETTER THAN YOU FOUND IT



'Leave it better than you found it' has become a slogan by campers, hikers, hunters and trappers, and anyone else who enjoys outdoors. The idea is basic: not only do you leave a natural place as it was, you leave it better than you found it. How do you do this? One easy step is to pick up any litter you see, even one piece.

Use the checklist below to guide your visit. Compare it with a classmate when you return.

- Tuck a grocery bag into your backpack or pocket in case you pick up some trash.  
.....
- When you get there, make note of any garbage cans or recycling bins.  
.....
- Pick up 1 to 3 pieces of trash. Don't touch anything that looks dangerous, sharp, or unsanitary. Don't try to fish stuff out of Grace Lake – you might get wet!  
.....
- Leave rocks, plants, and other natural objects as you find them.  
.....
- Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.  
.....
- Respect wildlife. Don't approach animals or birds.  
.....
- Never feed animals or birds. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviours, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.  
.....
- Preserve the trail markers and signs: Read, but do not touch.  
.....
- Do not build structures, open or touch bird houses, pick reeds, etc.  
.....
- Pay attention while walking to roots, and other tripping hazards.  
.....
- Let nature's sounds be heard. Avoid loud voices and noises.  
.....
- Do not jump on or rock the floating trails.  
.....
- 



# I'M NOT A BEAVER!



Muskrats are medium-sized semi-aquatic rodents that live at Grace Lake. The muskrat is found usually in wetlands and waterways over a wide range of climates and habitats. Muskrats swim using their long vertically flattened tails. Beavers have wide, flat tails. Unlike beavers, muskrats do not have webbed feet.

The bulk of a muskrat's diet comes from roots, grasses, leaves, and stems. Some of their favourite foods are cattails and water lilies. They also may be carnivorous when there are no plants available.

Muskrats are especially adapted to chewing on plants underwater. Their lips can close behind their teeth so that they can chew on roots and stems without water getting in their mouth, throat or nose! Muskrats can stay underwater for up to 15 minutes by reducing their heart rate and storing oxygen in their muscles.

A female muskrat can have two to three litters each year. The gestation period lasts about a month, and litters contain between five and nine offspring.

When you visit Grace Lake you may see a few muskrat houses. They look like haystacks and are built on a submerged log or a dense grouping of bullrushes. Muskrats pile up mud and plants, other than trees, on this base. The structure's center is then hollowed out creating one chamber.

Muskrats can also build smaller shelters known as push-ups. When the ice is still relatively thin, muskrats will chew holes in the ice and push up vegetation with mud on to the ice to create a shelter where they can safely feed and rest.

It is hard to tell a muskrat and a beaver apart when they are swimming. A telltale sign is their tail! A muskrat swims with its tail slightly above the water, while the beaver's tail is usually located under the water surface when swimming.

## KEY TERMS

SEMI-AQUATIC

RODENT

WETLAND

CARNIVORE

BURROW

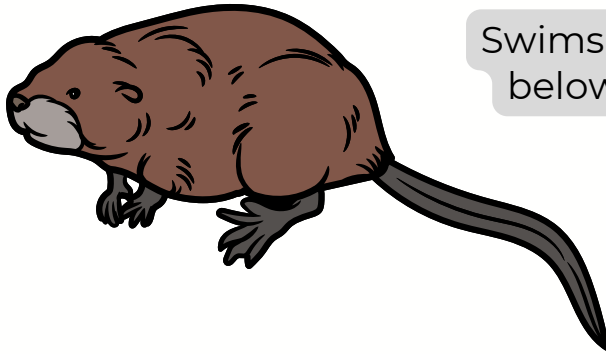
OMNIVORE

HERBIVORE

# I'M NOT A BEAVER!



**INSTRUCTIONS:** Draw a line to connect the description to either the muskrat or the beaver.



Swims with tail below water

Has a wide, flat tail

Live in shelters called 'push-ups'

Is a herbivore

Has one litter each year

Has a long, thin tail

Has webbed feet

Lives in marshes, swamps, or wetlands

Has two to three litters each year



Lives in ponds, streams, lakes, and rivers

Is an omnivore

Does not have webbed feet

Swims with tail above water

# SOMETIMES I'M BROWN, SOMETIMES I'M WHITE



There are three species of smaller **weasels** found in Manitoba. They are **ermine** (also called the short-tailed weasel), the **long-tailed weasel**, and the **least weasel**.

The least weasel is the smallest species. They prefer coniferous forest or tundra, but also inhabit marshes, meadows, and broken woodlands.

Long-tailed weasels are the largest species. They prefer mixed hardwood forest but also inhabit other forests or open country, always near water.

The ermine turns white in the winter and are found in boreal forest, meadows, and riverbanks.

The long and thin body of the weasel allows it to travel through burrows and narrow passageways as it hunts small rodents such as mice and voles. Since their body shape results in a higher heat loss, they must eat day and night to fuel their body. In addition to small rodents, they may also hunt amphibians, birds, bird eggs, insects, worms and even hares and small squirrels.

Look up in the trees and on the ground, as you never know when or where a weasel will appear!

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Complete the wordsearch on the following page.



# SOMETIMES I'M BROWN, SOMETIMES I'M WHITE



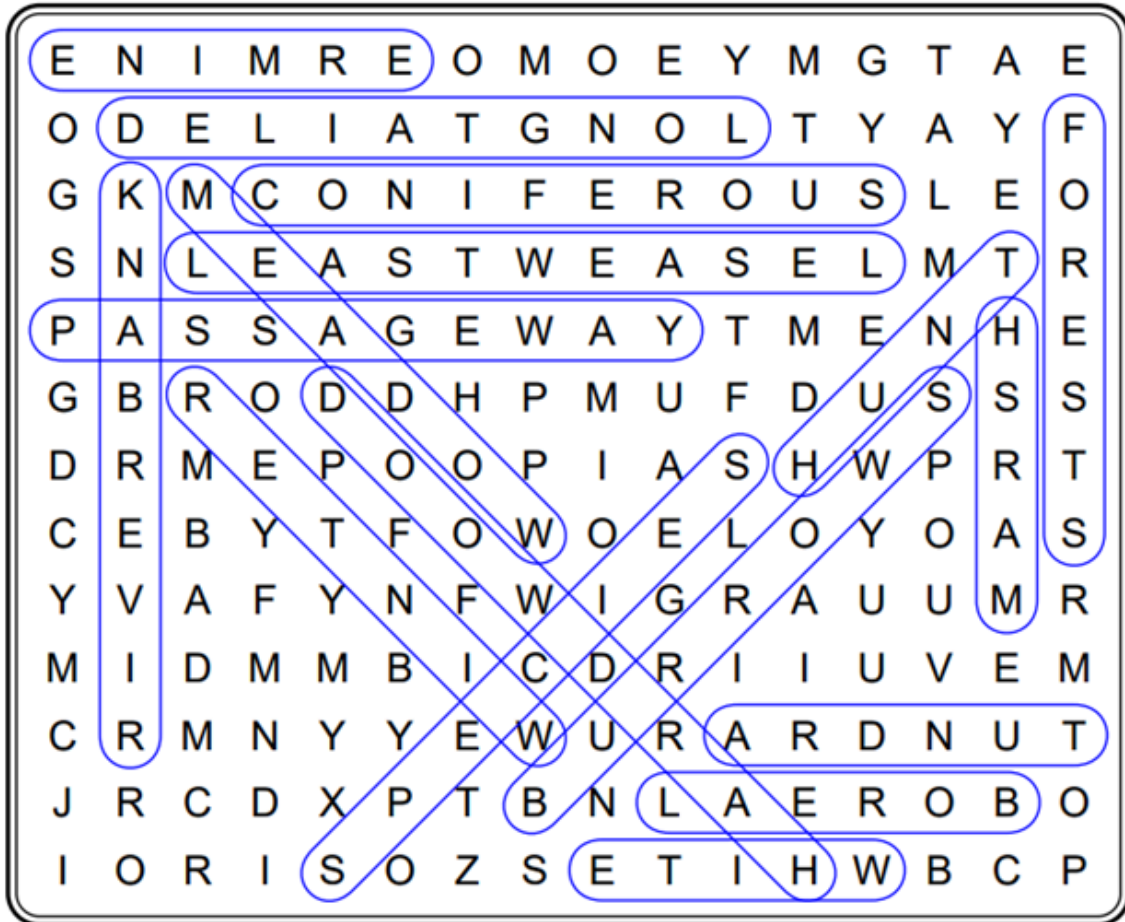
Find and circle each of the words from the list below. Words may appear forwards or backwards, horizontally, vertically or diagonally in the grid.



FORESTS  
WHITE  
WINTER  
BOREAL  
RIVERBANK  
BURROWS  
PASSAGEWAY  
HUNT

SPECIES  
ERMINE  
LONGTAILED  
LEASTWEASEL  
CONIFEROUS  
TUNDRA  
MARSH  
MEADOW  
HARDWOOD

# SOMETIMES I'M BROWN, SOMETIMES I'M WHITE



## KEY



# WORD SORT



Most plants and animals have scientific names. These are called *binomial nomenclature* and are based on Latin and Greek words. For example: *Ursus americanus* is the black bear. The full name of a species is given as two words: its genus, which identifies the species (always capitalized) followed by the epithet, the specific name (never capitalized).

In the Cree language, all words are either animate (living) or inanimate (non-living). Some words can be both, depending in how they are used. Typically, plants and animals are animate.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Sort the plants and animals into the correct column.

	SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	CREE
ochāk			
ruffed grouse	Ondata zibethicus	muskrat	
Bonasa umbellus		fisher	
wakenatek			
Picea mariana	Lepus americanus		wapos
wachuskw			
snowshoe hare	Larix laricina	tamarack	
kusketāmenayek			okasko
Pekania pennanti		black spruce	

# WORD SORT



## ANSWER KEY

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	CREE
Ondatra zibethicus	muskrat	<b>wachusuk</b>
<b>Pekania pennanti</b>	fisher	<b>ochāk</b>
Lepus americanus	<b>snowshoe hare</b>	wapos
Larix laricina	tamarack	<b>wakenatek</b>
<b>Bonasa umbellus</b>	<b>ruffed grouse</b>	okasko
<b>Picea mariana</b>	black spruce	<b>kusketāmenayek</b>

# WE ARE NOT PINES, WE ARE SPRUCE!



## KEY TERMS

CONIFEROUS

PINE

DECIDUOUS

SPRUCE

Is it a spruce? Maybe it's a pine. Maybe we'll just keep walking along the Grace Lake Boardwalk and Trails and admire the shrubs and bushes instead.

Calling all trees with spikey green needles a "Christmas tree" doesn't really cut it. To begin with, coniferous trees are "evergreen" trees that don't lose their needles in the winter like deciduous trees that lose their leaves (except for tamarack, but more on that in a bit). Conifers also have cones as seed pods. While both pine and spruce trees keep their needles all year long, pine trees have longer needles that come off the tree branches in groups.

Along the trail you will find black spruce, white spruce, and tamarack. What's the difference? Black spruce have small, egg-shaped or rounded cones and their uppermost branches cluster together giving their tops a club shape. White spruce have longer cones and the tree itself is cone-shaped (like a Christmas tree). Tamarack have small egg-shaped cones and needles which form on little woody nubs in leaf clusters. The needles are short, flat and soft and in the fall, they turn from green to a bright yellow. Soon after, the needles fall off the tree.

Spruce trees unite!

**INSTRUCTIONS:** On the following page, fill in the speech bubbles describing the characteristics of each tree. Start each sentence with the pronoun 'I'.

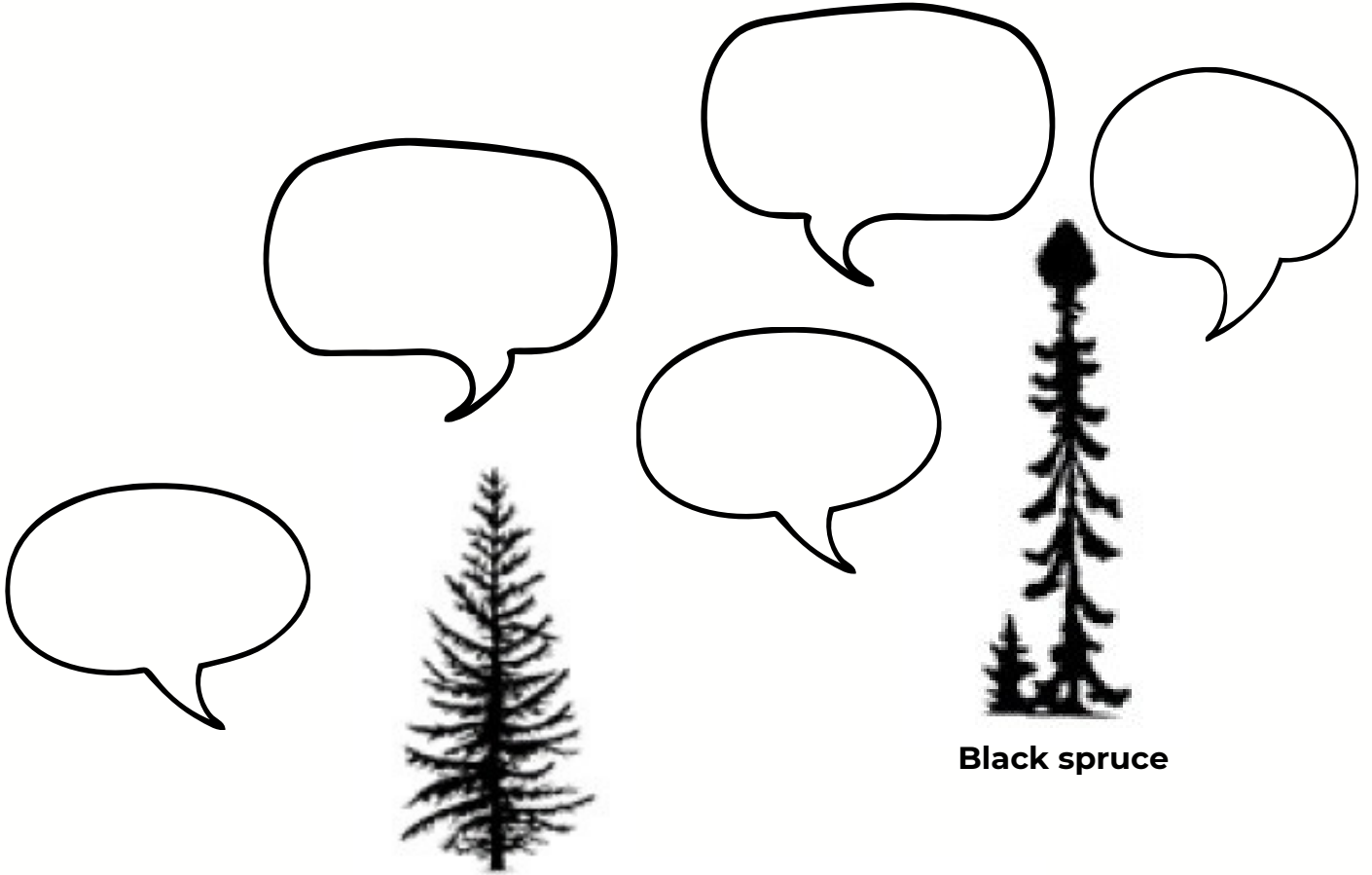
Here is an example:

*I am a spruce tree, I have needles, not leaves*

Why do the needles of the tamarack turn yellow and fall off the tree in autumn?

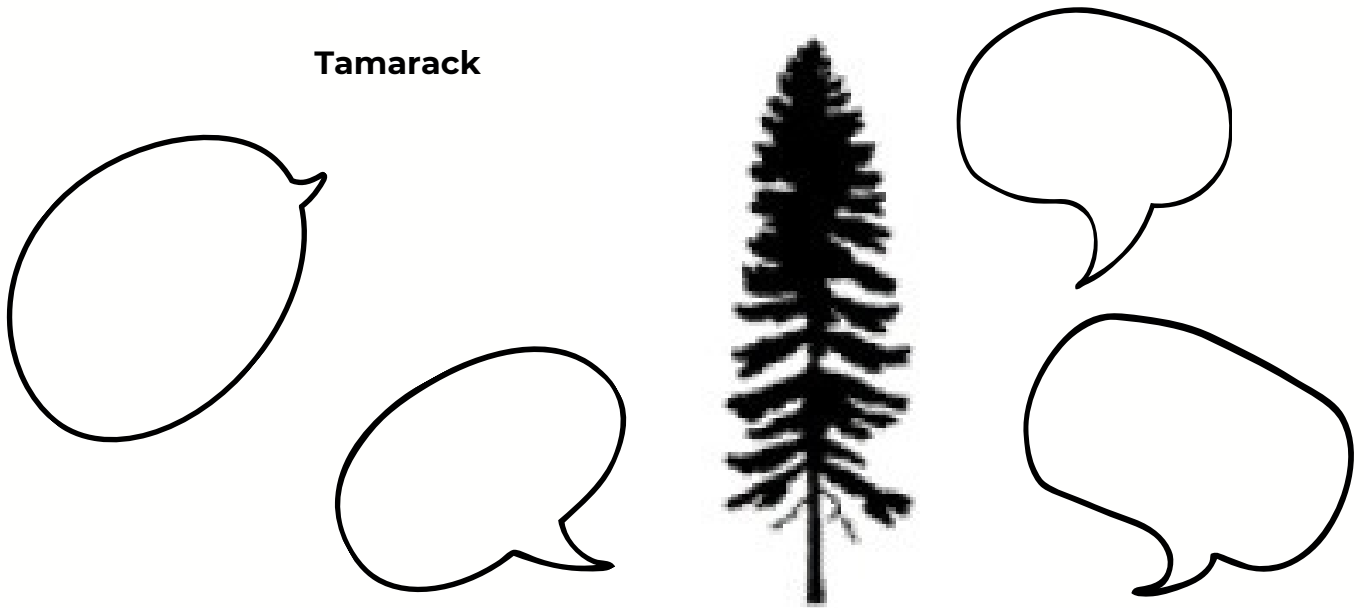


# WE ARE NOT PINES, WE ARE SPRUCE!



**Tamarack**

**Black spruce**



**White spruce**

# TRAIL SCAVENGER HUNT



**INSTRUCTIONS:** As you explore the trail keep your eye out for the following. Circle the ones you find!



Bear claw prints



Sap wells



Fungi



Cone



Recycling bin



Spruce tree



Boardwalk

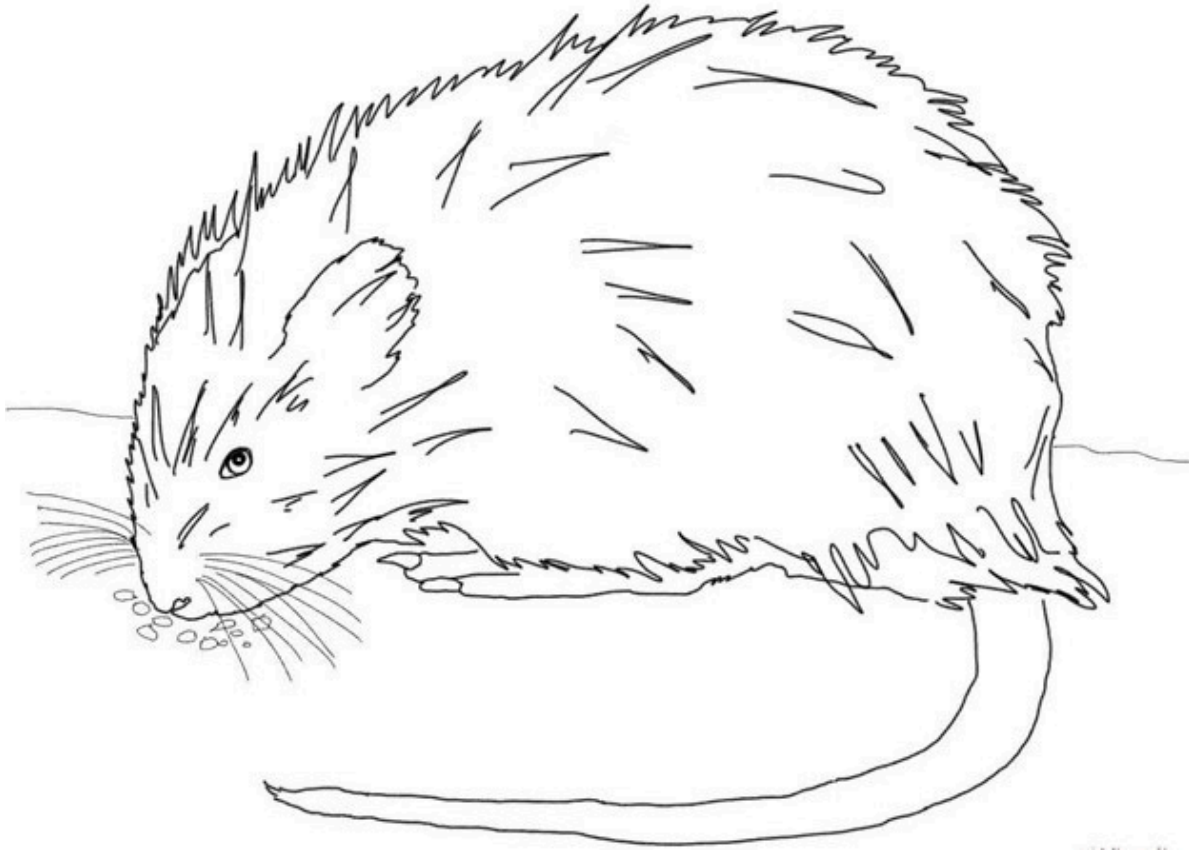


Bird



Lichen

# COLOURING PAGE



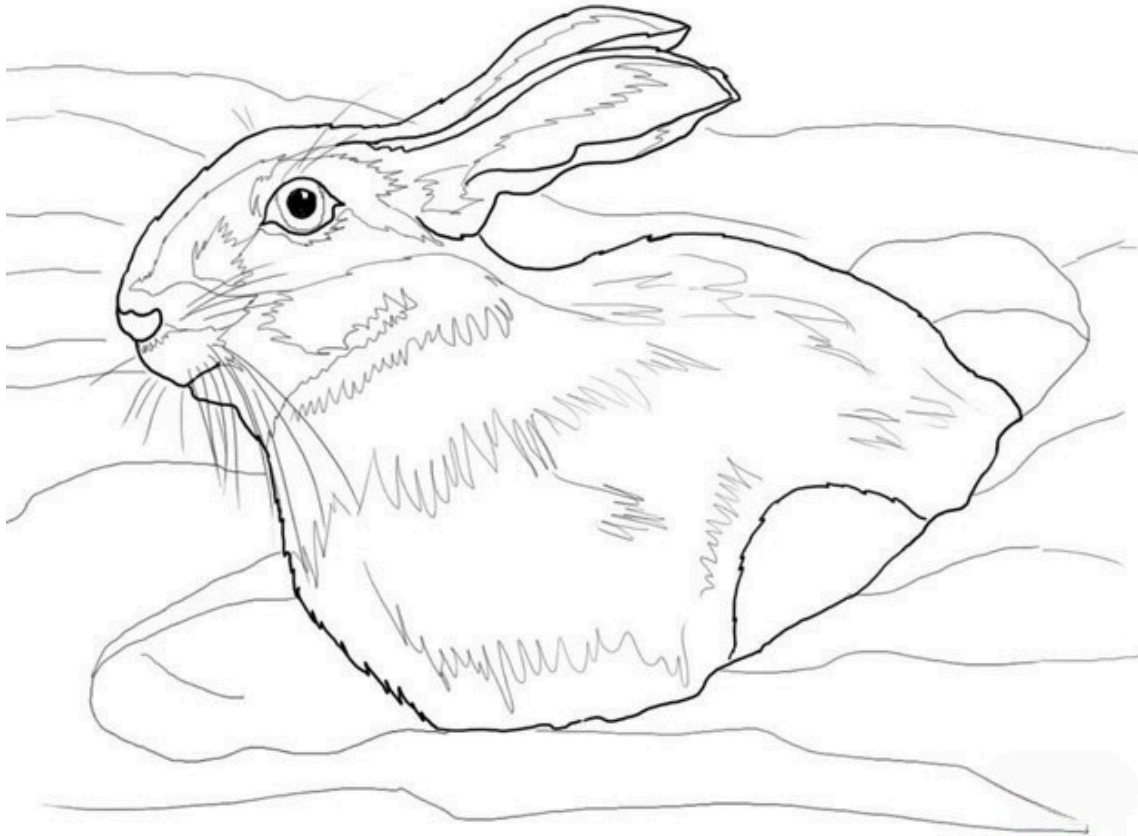
Muskrat | wachusk | Ondata zibethicus

# COLOURING PAGE



Beaver | amisk | *Castor canadensis*

# COLOURING PAGE



Snowshoe Hare | wapos | *Lepus americanus*



# COLOURING PAGE



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker | *Sphyrapicus varius*

# COLOURING PAGE



Barn Swallow | *Hirundo rustica*

# COLOURING PAGE



Pileated Woodpecker | omonekano | *Drycopus pileatus*



# CONTACT



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<https://opasquiatrails.ca/>



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