

Groundhog Day: Weather Predictions from the Animal World

天気予報と聞くと、専門家や最新の技術を思い浮かべますよね。でもアメリカには、動物の行動から季節の行方を考える、少しユニークな習慣があります。毎年同じ時期に注目されるこの行事は、科学よりも、伝統や楽しさを大切にしてきました。こうした習慣が今も続いている理由は何なのでしょうか。あなたは、昔からの行事や言い伝えをどのくらい信じていますか？



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

A groundhog from the small town of Punxsutawney in the state of Pennsylvania again predicted that North America would have six more weeks of winter.

On Thursday, thousands of people gathered around a hill called Gobbler's Knob to watch the yearly event. A group of men in black coats and top hats woke up the groundhog from his long winter sleep. It was as if the groundhog, named Punxsutawney Phil, told them, "I see a shadow...It's six more weeks of winter weather."

Since 1887, tradition says that if Punxsutawney Phil does not see his shadow on Groundhog Day, February 2, spring will come early.

Groundhog Day is believed to have come from the ancient European tradition of Candlemas Day. On that day clergy would bless and give out candles to Christians for the long winter.

Some versions of the ancient story say that in parts of Germany, people thought that if a hedgehog saw his shadow on Candlemas Day there would be a “Second Winter” — or six more weeks of bad weather. As Germans migrated to what is now the state of Pennsylvania, they chose another animal, and Groundhog Day was born.

Not just groundhogs predict the weather

The tradition is [celebrated](#) in many places around the United States and Canada. Countdown to Groundhog Day keeps a list showing 157 such celebrations in North America.

But the animals do not always agree — and not all of them are groundhogs.

Staten Island Chuck, a groundhog once known for biting the finger of then-New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, predicted it would be an early spring. It is hard to argue with that since the National Weather Service said on the social media service Twitter that the lack of snow in the northeast “has been extremely unusual” this year.

In the state of Connecticut, Beardsley Bart, a prairie dog in Bridgeport, also predicted it would be an early spring this year. But Scramble the Duck, Jr. said it would be a long winter in nearby Eastford.

In the state of Ohio, Benny the Bass, a fish, ate a minnow - or a small fish - soon after its release. The Buckeye Lake Region Chamber of Commerce Winterfest said it means there will be an early spring. Tad and Lil, two frogs from Snohomish in the state of Washington, agreed that spring would come early on their own “Groundfrog Day” celebration.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration compared Punxsutawney Phil’s [forecast](#) in the past 10 years to the actual weather. The agency found that “on average, Phil has gotten it right 40 percent of the time.”

Still, Phil remains the most famous weather predictor thanks to the movie *Groundhog Day*. In 1993, actor Bill Murray played a weather reporter in the film. The reporter finds himself stuck in time and wakes up on the same day, over and over again, while visiting Punxsutawney.

The movie popularized the usage of “Groundhog Day” to mean something is happening again and again.

Hai Do wrote this report for VOA Learning English.

Source: [Groundhog Day: Weather Predictions from the Animal World](#)

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2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. predict (v.) to say what will happen in the future

I predict that the Dodgers will go to the World Series again this year.

2. tradition (n.) a custom or belief passed down over time

It is our family's tradition to sing songs together at Christmastime.

3. ancient (n.) very, very old

Researchers found another ancient city in the forest of Guatemala.

4. celebrate (v.) to take part in special enjoyable activities

We are going to celebrate Nami's birthday with a party next Saturday.

5. forecast (n.) a report saying what the weather will be

The weather forecast says it will be sunny and warm tomorrow.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. What is Groundhog Day and where is it celebrated?

2. What does Punxsutawney Phil do on Groundhog Day? Why? What does it mean?

3. What did the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration find about Phil's predictions?

4. Are there traditions about animals and the weather in your culture or your area?

5. Groundhog Day is a "cross-quarter day," which marks the time halfway between the first day of winter and the first day of spring. Does your culture or area have any cross-quarter day celebrations?