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FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA  
1991 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. SB 122

Revision Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Department Affected: ALL

Title: Marmot Day BRU: \_\_\_\_\_

Component: \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor: Menard

Requestor: Menard

COMPONENT SERIAL NO. 

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5.40

Expenditures/Revenues: (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97
PERSONAL SERVICES	0	0	0	0	0	0
TRAVEL	0	0	0	0	0	0
CONTRACTUAL	0	0	0	0	0	0
SUPPLIES	0	0	0	0	0	0
EQUIPMENT	0	0	0	0	0	0
LAND & STRUCTURES	0	0	0	0	0	0
GRANTS, CLAIMS	0	0	0	0	0	0
MISCELLANEOUS	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL OPERATING	0	0	0	0	0	0

CAPITAL	0	0	0	0	0	0
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REVENUE	0	0	0	0	0	0
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FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

GENERAL FUND	0	0	0	0	0	0
FEDERAL FUNDS	0	0	0	0	0	0
OTHER	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	0	0

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
PART-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
TEMPORARY	0	0	0	0	0	0

Estimate of current year impact: \_\_\_\_\_

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary.)

This bill will not cost the executive branch any additional money.

Prepared By: David K. F. Otto *[Signature]* Phone: 465-4430

Division: Personnel Date: 2/21/91

Approved by Commissioner: Millett Keller *[Signature]*

Agency: Department of Administration *[Signature]* Date: 2/21/91

Distribution (by preparer): Legislative Finance, Legislative Sponsor, Requestor, OMB, & Impacted Agency(ies).



MAR 25 RECD

March 20, 1987

Members of the Alaska Legislature  
Pouch V  
Juneau, Ak. 99811

Honorable Members:

The Alaska Zoo would be honored to accept the designation of our Marmot as the Senior Hoary Marmot,....the Official State Marmot ... for the State of Alaska.

We would appreciate the advice of the Legislature, should they pass this legislation.

Sincerely,

Donna Rychetnik  
President



# Alaska State Legislature

Senator Curt Menard



While in Session:  
P.O. Box V  
Juneau, Alaska 99811  
(907)465-2679

Interim:  
165 E. Parks Highway  
Wasilla, Alaska 99687  
(907)373-2878

Senate District:  
E

## ALASKA MARMOT DAY

After the long days of winter when thoughts turn to the coming of spring, let's say around February 2nd, Americans turn to the venerable weatherman, the groundhog, to share his insights on winter and spring.

And that means that here in the Great Land, Alaskans have long had to rely on Outsiders to forecast our climatic future.

Since we are different, since we are unique, for Alaskan winters we need our own local prognosticator - Fellow Legislators, we need our own Marmot Day.

Who could be better qualified to advise Alaskans on lengthy winters but our own native Hoary Marmot?

While it is true a few carpetbagging groundhogs have jumped the border and come in around Northway, we should endorse our own Alaskan weatherman, and for that, I respectfully suggest, the Hoary Marmot who ranges from Ketchikan to Anaktuvuk Pass, who with his cousin the Arctic Marmot covers virtually the entire State of Alaska, is best suited.

In Alaska we should recognize February 2nd as Marmot Day, and stop the continued gawking at Lower 48 Groundhogs; we need to promote our Alaska Hire Policy right down to the last Marmot. It's time to retire Punxsutawney Phil of Pennsylvania and rely on Smoke Alarm, presently chief Marmot at the Zoo in Anchorage.

Legislative Colleagues - I propose that the senior Hoary Marmot housed at the Alaska Zoo, now known by the name of Smoke Alarm, be recognized as the Official State Marmot, and that his successors continue to be so honored into perpetuity.

Consider the publicity for our fine Zoo, think of Alaskan schoolchildren celebrating February 2nd as Marmot Day, and look forward to Alaskans everywhere awaiting the judgement of our own venerable senior Hoary Marmot on the evening news.

For the aforementioned reasons and in accordance with solid Alaskan common sense, I urge your swift consideration and support in establishing Alaska Marmot Day. Thank you and warm regards,

Curt Menard





# The **MARMOT** in Alaska



Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Wildlife Notebook Series

The hoary marmot (*Marmota caligata*), the Alaska marmot (*Marmota broweri*), and the woodchuck (*Marmota monax*) are the three species of marmots that live in Alaska. The hoary marmot can be found at the bases of active talus slopes in the mountains of central, southeastern, and southwestern Alaska. It also occurs down to sea level along some areas of the coast. The Alaska marmot lives in similar talus habitat throughout much of the Brooks Range, and the woodchuck digs its dens in loess (wind-deposited) soils along river valleys in the dry lowlands of eastcentral Alaska.

**General Description:** Large relatives of the squirrel, the hoary and closely related Alaska marmots occurring in the State weigh 10 pounds or more and may exceed 24 inches in total length. The woodchuck weighs between 2 and 6 pounds and can measure up to 20 inches long. The animals attain their maximum weight in late summer, when they accumulate thick layers of fat which will sustain them through winter hibernation. Body shape is similar in all three species: head short and broad, legs short, ears small, body thickset, tail densely furred, and front paws clawed for digging burrows. Hoary and Alaska marmots are predominantly gray, with a darker lower back and face and a dark, reddish tail. The hoary marmot has a white patch above its nose and usually has dark brown feet, giving it the Latin name *caligata*, meaning "booted." The Alaska marmot does not have a white face patch, its feet may be light or dark, and its fur is much softer than the stiff fur of the hoary marmot. A uniform reddish brown, the woodchuck has an unmarked brown face. The name woodchuck originated as "wuchuk," a Cree Indian word used to describe a number of similar-sized animals, and does not describe characteristics of the woodchuck's behavior or habitat preference.

**History:** In Alaska, all marmots mate in April or May. About a month later, two to six young are born hairless and blind. The young disperse 2 months after birth and may breed for the first time when they are 2 or 3 years old. Marmots may live to be 5 years old or more. They feed on grasses, flowering plants, berries, roots, mosses, and lichens.

Hoary and Alaska marmots make their summer homes on the bases of active talus slopes, where the rocks protect them from predators and provide lookout stations. Woodchuck dens may be up to 30 feet long, are dug in the loess soils of river valleys in Interior Alaska, and end with a chamber containing a large grass nest. Most marmot dens have a main entrance with a mound of dirt near the hole and a number of concealed entrances. Marmots are social animals. Although each family has a separate burrow, these burrows are located near each other, forming a colony.

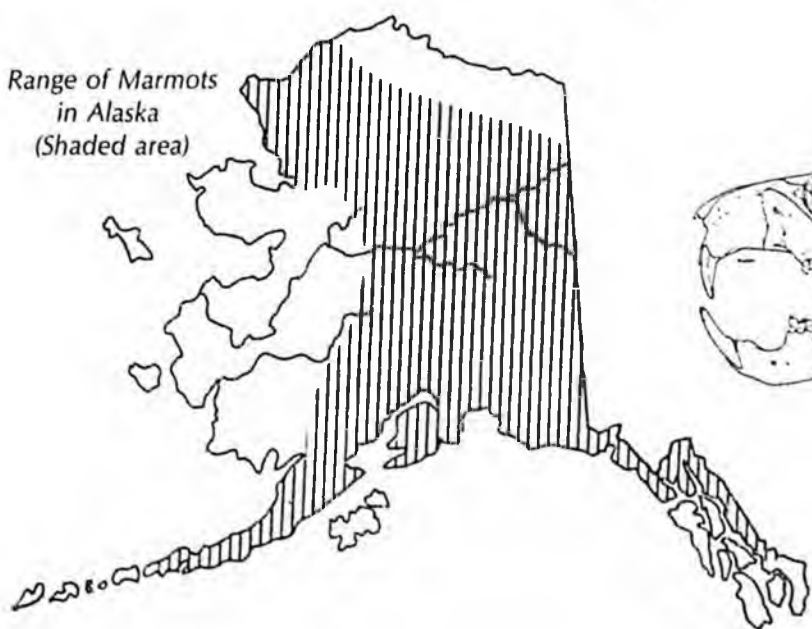
True hibernators, marmots enter a state of torpor in winter, all bodily functions are reduced. Hoary marmots and woodchucks hibernate alone in the same burrow in which they spend the summer. To protect themselves from the cold, they plug the tunnel leading to the nest chamber with a dirt, vegetation, and feces mixture. They emerge from their winter hibernation in April or early May to find food and mates. Adapted to the harsher winter climate of the Brooks Range, Alaska marmots create a special winter den, which has a single entrance and is characteristically located on an exposed ridge that becomes snow-free early in spring. The entrance is plugged after all colony members are inside, and no animals can leave until the plug thaws in early May. Consequently, Alaska marmots mate before they emerge from their winter den. These winter dens are relatively permanent for each colony, and some are used for more than 20 years. Because hibernation begins in September, most marmots in Alaska spend two-thirds of each year locked in their winter dens.

Marmots are most active in early morning and late afternoon, although they may leave their burrows during other daylight hours. Marmots need wind to control mosquito levels and rarely venture out on calm days. The Alaska marmot marks its territory by rubbing secretions from its face glands on rocks and along trails. The hoary marmot probably marks its territory in the same way.

The pelt colors of marmots help them blend with the lichen-covered rocks or rusty-brown soil of their surroundings. Nevertheless, marmots remain very wary and alert for predators including eagles, foxes, coyotes, wolves, and bears. When the Alaska marmot is alarmed, it produces a slurred, low-pitched warning call. The alarm call of both hoary marmot and the woodchuck is a loud whistle. They also hiss, squeal, growl, and yip. In areas where marmots are hunted by humans, they have learned to remain quiet when humans approach. Good climbers and swimmers, woodchucks may also take to trees or water to avoid predators.

Marmots often secondarily benefit other animals and plants. Abandoned marmot holes can become homes for small mammals. In moderation, their digging and defecation loosen, aerate, and improve the soil. Alaska Natives have long relished marmot meat and have used its thick coat for warm clothing. Although these wary animals are difficult to approach closely, persistent observers are rewarded by the fascinating sight of a marmot community.

Catherine Curby  
1982



# Spring is nigh as Phil fails to see shadow

Associated Press

PUNXSUTAWNEY — Punxsutawney Phil, America's premier groundhog, emerged from his burrow today and indicated in "unmistakable groundhogese" that he had failed to spot his shadow, a sure sign spring is just around the corner, according to Phil's followers.

"He stood proud, tall, and confident, surveyed the throng of loyal followers, peered skyward toward the east, and then fixed his eyes groundward," said county Judge Edwin Snyder. He is a member of the exclusive Punxsu-

See Spring, Page 12 ▶

# Spring is on way, Phil says

▶ Continued from Page 1

tawney Groundhog Club Inner Circle, which each year decides in advance whether Phil will "see" his shadow.

Snyder said Phil "turned to Groundhog President Jim Means and signaled to him in unmistakable groundhogese, 'There is no shadow today.'"

The squirming, 10-pound woodchuck was pulled from his man-made burrow atop Gobbler's Knob at sunrise, 7:27 a.m. Means held the groundhog up to his ear to hear the once-a-year prediction, then lifted him toward Snyder.

The approximately 1,500 people who had gathered under cloudy skies and in light rain cheered as Phil's forecast was announced.

"I've always wanted to come to this event ever since I was a kid," said Peter Teicher, 49, of Los Angeles. "I'm really excited. I couldn't sleep last night. It's a real thrill."

Other prognosticating groundhogs around the country followed Phil's lead and also failed to see their shadows.

Legend has it that if the famous groundhog sees his shadow when he emerges from his bungalow at sunrise on Feb. 2, there will be six more weeks of winter. If he doesn't, spring supposedly is just around the corner.

"You know and I know that Feb. 2 is too darn early to expect spring to come," said Tim Clark, executive editor of "The Old Farmer's Almanac."

But the two-legged variety of weather forecasters still are curious about what Phil has to say on Groundhog Day.

"I definitely do watch to see what he does. I didn't say I believe it. I say I watch it," said Albert Peterlin, a hydrologist for the National Weather Service in Har-

"This has a little bit of history and fact," he said. "Animals respond to temperature and environment as it occurs."

Before today, Phil had predicted an early spring only nine times since 1887, when German-born farmers initiated the yearly event in this small western Pennsylvania town.

The farmers borrowed from the legend of Candlemas, a Christian holiday celebrating the first time the infant Jesus was taken to the temple. An old Scottish couplet claims, "If Candlemas be fair, there'll be two winters in the year."

Groundhogs, part of the rodent family, usually hibernate by December and stay underground until April or so, but sometimes venture out early if the weather is mild.

"Phil's never been wrong," boasted Means, 66.

The 14 local businessmen who comprise the Inner Circle decide well in advance what Phil's forecast will be. Group members stage several rehearsals before Groundhog Day, when they don top hats and tails for the event.

Phil's handler, Bud Dunkel, sported a fake fur hat resembling a groundhog.

Every other day of the year, Phil lives at his heated, air-conditioned hutch at the local library with two other groundhogs, Philomena and Barney.

As far as "The Old Farmer's Almanac" is concerned, February — at least around Punxsutawney — will be extremely cold and snowy followed by similar weather in early March.

The National Weather Service is calling for a warmer than usual February, but a colder than usual March and April.

"If I were to give you the scientific point of view, I think it would be cold for the rest of this winter," said meteorologist Victor Nouhan. "Of course, that's worth a grain of salt."

Groundhog Octorara Orphie also saw no shadow in central Pennsylvania's Quarryville. And neither did West Virginia's Concord Charlie.

1990

# Here's the truth about groundhogs

By **DEBBIE MCKINNEY**  
Daily News reporter

Today is Groundhog Day, that glorious day when groundhogs emerge from hibernation to see — or not see — their shadows, thereby forecasting the arrival of spring.

Perhaps your favorite groundhog, woodchuck, whistlepig — or hoary marmot, the Alaska version — is sound asleep inside his burrow. Fret not. A gardening expert at the Washington Post offers readers this tip for perking up the little prognosticators:

Mix three quarts of ammonia in a quart of water. Poke a garden hose

down the groundhog's hole. Insert funnel into the other end of the hose. Pour.

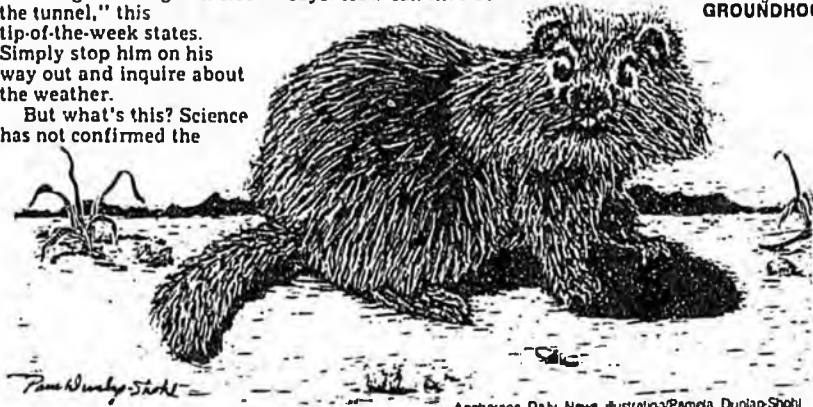
"The groundhog will flee the tunnel," this tip-of-the-week states. Simply stop him on his way out and inquire about the weather.

But what's this? Science has not confirmed the

forecasting powers of the groundhog? This is what World Book encyclopedia says. How can that be?

Obviously, science is slacking off on the job. Surely science doesn't

Please see Page D-2.  
**GROUNDHOG**



Anchorage Daily News illustration/Pamela Dunlap-Shohl

## GROUNDHOG DAY: Here's the truth, really

Continued from Page D-1

consider psychic groundhogs an unworthy pursuit! Wasn't it two Yale researchers who completed a study recently verifying once and for all that dogs are man's best friend and that frogs enjoy a slightly higher degree of popularity in American culture than gorillas? Your tax dollars at work. So why has the scientific community ignored the groundhog and his obviously beneficial contribution to man?

Apathy, no doubt. Most Americans don't know the first thing about groundhogs, so there have been no marches on Washington demanding the studies be done.

Does the average American know, for instance, that the male groundhog, when looking for a woman, sits at her doorway wagging his tail in friendly dog fashion until invited to come in? Or that the groundhog has been trained to perform circus acts? Or that a lonely groundhog in captivity once tried to talk to an idling vacuum cleaner?

I think not.

Therefore, we've prepared this simple groundhog literacy test. Please read each question carefully before answering "true" or "false."

1. A groundhog is a rodent.
2. Groundhog babies are cute.
3. The groundhog's number one enemy is the fox.
4. A groundhog's psychic ability is limited to predicting the arrival of spring.
5. When cornered, the groundhog will dig himself deep into his hole.

Now let's see how you did. The correct answers are as follows: False, False, False, False, False.

The groundhog is not a rodent, but a term of endearment for obnoxious people who park their Saab Turbos sideways in parking lots to protect the paint.

*Groundhogs have been known to accurately predict baseball scores and the relative weight of Tammy Bakker's eyelashes.*

In addition to the weather, groundhogs have been known to accurately predict baseball scores and the relative weight of Tammy Bakker's eyelashes.

Groundhog babies, born naked and blind, are about as cute as oyster shooters.

The groundhog's number one enemy is the gardening expert at the Washington Post.

And finally, when cornered, it's Mayor Tom Fink who digs himself deeper in a hole, not the groundhog.

Now that we've established that the average American knows virtually nothing about the groundhog, allow us to divulge a previously undisclosed fact — the real reason why science has been reluctant to nail down, once and for all, the accuracy of groundhog predictions.

You'd better sit down.

Being as this is a newspaper and newspapers are devoted to the truth, we believe you have a right to know what science already knows: groundhogs don't give a whoop-de-do about predicting the arrival of spring.

There is, however, a very good reason why they occasionally crawl out of their dens in the middle of winter, lured by a force beyond their control, according to Grzimek's Animal Life Encyclopedia.

You see, they gotta pee.