

Watch Groundhog Day 2024: Punxsutawney Phil declares an early spring

Punxsutawney Phil, the renowned groundhog who's been predicting when winter will end since 1887, says things are about to warm up.

"Glad tidings on this Groundhog Day. An early spring is on the way," a proclamation was read out at Gobbler's Knob, elating a crowd of thousands of people who had weathered dark and cold to see the famous rodent.

Masses of people came to Punxsutawney, Pa., to see the small town's famous groundhog perform his annua duty in person. But even more visited online to see live video streamed from the event.

The event was livestreamed on [PCNTV](#), a Pennsylvania nonprofit, and by [The Associated Press](#).

It all comes with a caveat.

"On average, Phil has gotten it right 30% of the time over the past 10 years," the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [said in an update](#) Friday.

Could anything symbolize our era more than legions of people using smartphones to learn whether a prognosticating rodent is predicting six more weeks of winter?

That's Groundhog Day in 2024 — a mix of modern technology with traditions that date back to ancient Celtic times.

We all just want the promise of spring

"It's the middle of winter, literally. Frankly, we're bored, and we're looking for something to keep us occupied during the time of year," biology professor Christine Maher from the [University of Southern Maine](#) told NPR. "Maybe guessing about the weather is an idiosyncratic way to keep us engaged. And maybe we're desperate for a sign that spring is coming!"

The practice of seeking a sign of an early spring or a late winter stems from the Christian tradition of Candlemas — which itself has roots in older observances.

"Candlemas was originally a Celtic festival marking the 'cross-quarter day,' or midpoint of the season," according to [the Almanac website](#). "The Sun is halfway on its advance from the winter solstice to the spring equinox."

By celebrating the groundhog, in other words, we're celebrating the return of the light, and the promise of spring.

Groundhogs — also called the woodchuck, land beaver, whistle pig, or red monk — were drafted into service for the day when Europeans realized the hibernating animal they associated with spring's arrival in the old country, a type of badger, wasn't native to North America.

Humans' expansion into formerly wooded lands has likely helped groundhogs thrive, Maher said. "By cutting down forests and creating more open areas with a food supply (herbaceous plants), we have created habitat that's more conducive to woodchucks."

"They also have adapted well to living around humans, much like other urban or suburban wildlife such as red foxes, chipmunks, and tree squirrels."

So, what's the Groundhog Day tradition?

If the animal sees its shadow, the tradition goes, it means six more weeks of winter, and he (or she) returns to their burrow. If there is no shadow, the animal stays put, signaling an early spring.

Punxsutawney Phil is the most famous example of the forecasting animals, having been on the job since 1887. And while males dominate the roster, a number of female groundhogs [are also in the prediction game](#). Other groundhogs, and even other animals, are also consulted for a sign of when winter will be over.

There's no Groundhog Day joy in Milltown, N.J., again this year, where [Milltown Mel died](#) before he could make his prediction in 2022. The town's efforts to replace him have [run into legal snags](#).

Events around the big reveal in Punxsutawney have grown over the years, along with wide media interest and corporate sponsors. The schedule for Groundhog Day in 2024 ranges from a "[Lunch With Phil](#)" to a talent show, a Groundhog ball and a banquet, culminating in "[Hogspitality Village](#)" and another event titled simply, "Party All Night!"