



Mr. Woolly Bear, Weatherman

By Patti Hutchison

Meet Mr. Woolly Bear. Surely you've seen him. He's cute and fuzzy, with black and brown stripes. He may look like an ordinary caterpillar, but some people say he can predict the weather! Will it be a long, cold winter? Ask Mr. Woolly Bear.

Some people study insects and animals in order to tell how harsh the winter will be. Woolly Bears join their friends the squirrels, honeybees, and groundhogs as predictors of winter weather.

According to some, the stripes on a woolly bear can tell you what the winter will be like. If the light brown band is long, the winter will be mild. If the black band is longer, the weather will be more cold and snowy. What about the ones that have two black stripes? These show that the beginning and the end of winter will be severe. But the middle will be mild.

Scientists have studied woolly bears to see if they really can predict the weather. Most scientists seem to think they can't. They say that the bands' lengths are caused by the caterpillar's age, not by the weather.

Mr. Woolly Bear's weather predictions are not always right. Weather scientists use computers and other modern equipment. But they are not always right, either.

Even if woolly bears can't predict the weather, they are still fun to watch. As they walk across your hand, they'll tickle you with their fuzzy bristles. If you catch a woolly bear in the winter, you can watch it spin its cocoon in the spring. Then it will turn into a tiger—an Isabella tiger moth, that is!

