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Groundhog Day

By [Tiffany Chaparro](#) | February
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Thousands of people gathered today in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania and watched as the famous groundhog, known as Punxsutawney Phil, came out of his burrow at Gobbler's Knob and saw his shadow.

"It's my shadow I see. Six more weeks of mild winter there will be," said the announcer, speaking on behalf of the furry forecaster. The "mild" was a reference to this year's unusually warm winter.



Punxsutawney Phil, the weather-predicting groundhog, is held by handler Bill Deeley in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania on February 2, 2006. (Photo: Keith Srakocic/AP Wide World)

Although a few "boos" came from the crowd at the news of a longer winter, most spectators were just happy to be part of the festivities. Many people had been waiting since the previous night in anticipation of Phil's big day.

"It's been really wonderful. This is just a ball. I'm having so much fun," said Nancy Durr, a woman from Paxton, Nebraska. Durr had been waiting outside for Punxsutawney Phil since 2:15 a.m.

A number of people in the crowd had the Super Bowl on the brain, turning the gathering into a celebration for the Pittsburgh Steelers, who are playing in the big game this Sunday. Excited fans in football jerseys sang, "Here we go Steelers."

While the crowd can expect to see Punxsutawney Phil again next year, one familiar face will be missing from the crowd. Bill Deely, 56, has been Phil's handler for the past 15 years, a job that included taking Phil to different special events. Deely has said he no longer has the time or energy for the job, and he is stepping down after this year.

The Tradition

Each February 2, thousands of people come to the small Pennsylvanian town and wait to see if Punxsutawney Phil will see his shadow. According to legend, if the groundhog sees his shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter weather. If he doesn't see his shadow, then spring will come early.

SOURCE



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According to the Groundhog Club, the celebration of Groundhog Day was born from a superstition, among some of Pennsylvania's earliest German settlers. The settlers believed that if a **hibernating** animal, an animal that sleeps through the winter, casts a shadow on February 2 winter would last longer.

Since 1886, the people of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania have looked to Phil for predictions.

Phil the Forecaster?

According to researchers, it seems that Punxsutawney Phil may not be as accurate as you think. Phil's predictions are only right about 39 percent of the time. This means that Phil is more likely to be wrong most of the time than right!

"They are horrible forecasters," said Kim Klockow, a researcher at a weather convention in Atlanta. "We still love them and all, but better to flip a coin."

About the Author

Tiffany Chaparro is a contributing writer for Scholastic News Online.

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