

Russian Groundhogs Agree: It's Going to Be a Long, Cold Winter

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Moscow Zoo employees on Monday blamed the capital's cold temperatures for the groundhog's behavior.

On a regular day, a sleeping groundhog is no cause for alarm but on Monday, Moscow Zoo's groundhog's snores spelled out an ominous message — Muscovites are facing a long winter.

Traditionally a U.S. holiday, some Russian zoos have also taken to celebrating Groundhog Day on Feb. 2, scrupulously analyzing their groundhogs' movements to deduce whether spring will come early that year.

If a groundhog comes out of its burrow, warmer temperatures are on the horizon. But if the animal is still in hibernation, tradition goes, a long-lasting winter is ahead.

Moscow Zoo employees on Monday blamed the capital's cold temperatures for the groundhog's behavior, Moskva news agency reported.

"The groundhog is not awake yet, it's still cold in Moscow. It will wake up as the snow melts,"

a spokesperson for the capital's zoo told Moskva.

But news reports from zoos around Russia confirmed the depressing weather forecast.

Groundhog Busia, in Siberia's Kuzbass region, was also still in hibernation on Monday, Vse42.ru reported.

In Krasnoyarsk, also in Siberia, extreme cold temperatures mean groundhogs are still fast asleep in February, so raccoons and badgers are used as an indicator instead. This year, neither the raccoons nor badgers gave a sign of life, Argumenty i Fakti on Monday cited zoo employee Yekaterina Mikhlova as saying.

Mikhlova added the raccoons and badgers were expected to wake up in March.

Only groundhog Frol, at St. Petersburg's Zoo, made an appearance on Sunday, bringing with him the promise of warmer temperatures, local news website Dnevnik.ru reported.

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