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Hopping Ahead of Climate Change: Snowshoe Hares, Science, and Survival

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Book Review

Title: Hopping Ahead of Climate Change: Snowshoe Hares, Science, and Survival

Author: Sneed B. Collard III

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Publisher: Bucking Horse Books

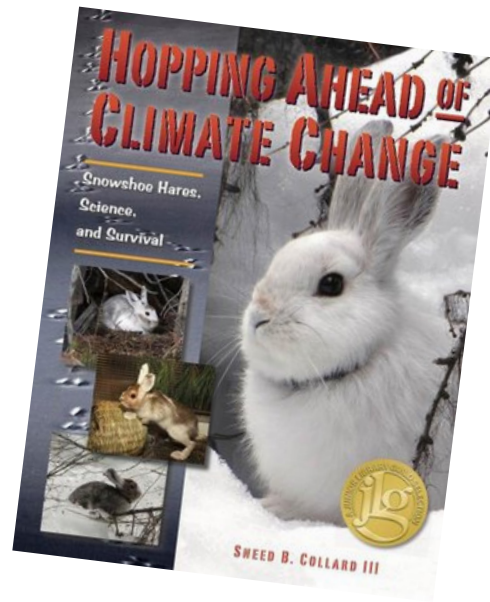
Publication Year: 2016

ISBN: 9780984446087

Number of Pages: 64

Interest Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent



Review

Deep in the woods of Montana, biologist Scott Mills notices a big problem with a small animal. The snowshoe hares he has studied for most of his career are not changing their coat colors fast enough to protect themselves from predators. With season lengths fluctuating due to climate change, many snowshoe hares are getting killed off quicker because they haven't molted fast enough to match their environment. Without any outside aid, snowshoe hares could become a threatened species. To learn more, Mills is studying coat-changing animals in a variety of climates. In Washington state, not all snowshoe hares molt to white each year. This genetic variation could help shield the population from climate change's effects. Mills and his research team believe the Montana snowshoe hares could evolve a similar genetic characteristic through natural selection. Even though there is a chance these hares may change their genes to survive, this doesn't mean humans should foster the climate change problem that caused these hares and other animals to be threatened.

Climate change can be a very touchy topic. But Collard's book addresses the issue from the forest-floor perspective of Montana's snowshoe hares; a species that no one can argue is being affected by climate change. Readers learn how climate change has disrupted the lives of these small creatures and how their declining numbers could drastically threaten their ecosystem. Thanks to Collard's work with Mills and other researchers, readers are given bite-sized amounts of information to showcase the effects of climate change in easy-to-read maps, graphs, and topic definitions. Collard takes his story a step further than other climate change authors by expressing a hopeful future for both the hares and humans involved. The hares' hope may be in natural selection, but the hope for humans comes through Collard's doable and well-defined suggestions to decrease the population's climate change footprint. A well-written and thoughtful book any library should have on hand for inspiring readers to make a difference in their world.