

Woolly Bear Caterpillar



Easily recognized by their fuzzy-looking black and brown bands on their body, the banded woolly bear caterpillar is on a mission to find a spot to spend the winter. You might see them crossing your path to find a hole in tree bark or space under a rock. Once it finds a suitable location, it produces a chemical called a cryoprotectant that allows it to freeze without damaging its tissues. Eventually its heart stops beating, and its blood freezes solid. When temperatures rise in the spring, it thaws, undergoes a metamorphosis, and emerges as an Isabella tiger moth. Legend tells it that the length of the black bands on woolly bears will predict the severity of the coming winter. However, research has shown it to correlate to the age of the caterpillar and the amount of moisture where it developed earlier that year.

Make your own woolly bear caterpillar

Materials: black and brown chenille stems (pipe cleaners), 2 googly eyes (optional), a pencil or stick, glue, scissors

Directions:

1. Cut a black chenille stem and a brown chenille stem in half.
2. Twist 3 chenille stems together, end to end, in the order black, brown, black.
3. You should now have one long chenille stem made up of three half pieces. Tightly wind it around a pencil and then slide the pencil out.
4. Glue on some googly eyes, or make your own eyes out of paper. Once the glue is dry your caterpillar is ready to explore!