

# Punxsutawney Phil: 6 more weeks of winter

By Tina Susman, Los Angeles Times

Punxsutawney Phil, the Pennsylvania groundhog famous for making midwinter weather forecasts, had his moment in the spotlight early Thursday and declared that winter is far from over. But the competition begs to differ.

From Canada to Staten Island to the tiny town of Dunkirk, N.Y., on the shores of Lake Erie, other groundhogs competing for the title of grand prognosticator offered differing opinions on this Groundhog Day, which marks the midway point of winter. Perhaps they were confused by the unseasonably warm weather across much of the eastern half of the country. The temperature Wednesday at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport hit a record for the day: 64 degrees. That's more than 20 degrees above normal for this time of year.

Bob Will, who cares for Dunkirk Dave – a groundhog in upstate New York – along with many other sick and wounded marmots that he nurses back to health, calls the rivalry among groundhogs “a friendly competition.” But he also pointed out that while Phil, the most famous of the woodchucks, is actually pulled from his hole and paraded in front of a crowd, Dunkirk Dave is allowed to slowly emerge on his own from a hibernation spot under the ground in Will's yard.

“That's what they do – they pick them up by the neck and hold them up,” Will said of the event at Gobbler's Knob, Pa., which was unfolding as Dunkirk Dave poked his head above ground and apparently didn't spot a shadow, promising early spring weather. “But ours is in the ground. We always kid them and say ours is more accurate.”

Still, Punxsutawney Phil remains the big star in this competition, and as the sun slowly began creeping above the hills and trees of rural Pennsylvania on Thursday, thousands crowded Gobbler's Knob to await his annual prediction. Legend has it that if a groundhog sees his shadow, winter weather will last another six weeks. If no shadow appears, an early spring is on the way.

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