

ELINOR WONDERS WHY

EP 143 Frozen Fish

By: Adam Ruben

Elinor's Question: How do fish survive in a frozen pond?

Logline: When the lake freezes, Elinor and her friends grow concerned for all of the fish, but with Ranger Rabbit's help, they learn that even "frozen" lakes have liquid water underneath, and the fish are okay.

Curriculum Goals:

LS5c. Recognize that each kind of living thing has a habitat that has resources to meet its unique needs. (Fish can live in the lake even though the surface freezes.)

SEP1a. Demonstrate curiosity about the greater world outside of their environment. (Elinor and her friends wonder how fish survive the freeze.)

SEP1c. Ask and/or identify cause-and-effect questions that can be answered by an investigation. (Elinor and her friends ask whether the freeze harmed the fish, and they attempt to observe what's happening under the ice.)

SEP6a. Use background knowledge, experiences, and data to construct reasonable explanations and theories of natural phenomena. (Based on what they know about the progression of seasons, Elinor and her friends theorize about what has happened to the fish.)

SEP7b. Support thinking and argue ideas with evidence. (Elinor and her friends realize that the fish must be okay because the lake froze over last winter, and it was still full of fish in the spring.)

Main Characters: Elinor, Olive, Ari, Ranger Rabbit.

Non-Speaking Characters: Variety of animal town residents Koa, Mary and Liv, Mz. Mole.

Backgrounds - Town Lake (not frozen), Town Lake (frozen and snow-covered)

Props - Ranger Rabbit's notebook and pencil, Olive's notebook and pencil, thermometer, binoculars, fish, ducks, sign showing an ice skate in a green circle, ice skates, Thermos, mugs of hot chocolate, auger, chisel, measuring stick

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1. EXT. FOREST PATH - DAY

ELINOR, OLIVE, and ARI follow RANGER RABBIT down a path in the woods. It's late fall, and they wear their autumn clothes, though there is no snow on the ground yet.

1	ELINOR	1
	(narrating in a dramatic voice)	
	A rabbit, an elephant, and a bat explore the forest.	
2	OLIVE	2
	Two rabbits. Don't forget your mom!	
3	ELINOR	3
	Right! Two rabbits, an elephant, and a bat explore the forest. Who knows what they will find?	

2. EXT. LAKESIDE - DAY

They emerge from the woods and find themselves at the edge of the town lake, a large, blue body of water with a grassy bank alongside.

4	RANGER RABBIT	4
	Here we are!	
5	ELINOR	5
	And they find...the town lake!	

<SFX: ALL RIGHT, WE DID IT CHEERING WALLA> Ranger Rabbit crouches next to the lake and begins taking measurements - temperature, pH, etc. - which she records in a little ranger notebook. It should just look like she's dipping small things into the water or observing carefully, then writing something down. Ari walks over next to Ranger Rabbit.

6	ARI	6
	What are you doing, Ranger Rabbit?	
7	RANGER RABBIT	7
	Just checking on how things are going with the lake, Ari. A ranger has to keep track of a lot of information about the outdoors.	

Olive walks over and joins Ari.

8	OLIVE	8
	(smiling, holding up her own notebook and pencil)	
	(MORE)	

OLIVE (CONT'D)

I love keeping track of
information. That's my favorite
thing to do with information!

Ranger Rabbit checks her thermometer.

9	RANGER RABBIT	9
	Okay, the temperature is definitely getting colder...	

A couple of ducks paddle by, quacking a bit <SFX: Quacking>, dipping their heads in the water to eat.

10	RANGER RABBIT (CONT'D)	10
	And these last few ducks haven't flown south for the winter yet.	

Ari giggles, then dips a finger in the water.

11	ARI	11
	Brr! The water's starting to get cold too - better hurry up, ducks.	

At that moment the ducks rise up out of the water and start flying away. (NOTE: this is NOT a huge moment, there are just a couple of ducks - so it doesn't detract from what Elinor is looking at).

12	OLIVE	12
	Wow!! There they go. Bye ducks! Have a good trip!!	

13	ARI	13
	That's so cool! Don't you think, Elinor?	

ANGLE ON: Elinor stands a few feet away looking in a different direction, engrossed as she stares out across the lake.

ANGLE ON: Olive and Ari exchange a look, then hurry over to Elinor while Ranger Rabbit continues her work.

14	OLIVE	14
	What are you looking at?	

15	ELINOR	15
	(still staring at the lake) I saw a splash. And it sounded like, <i>bloop!</i>	

Ranger Rabbit joins them. Elinor points across the lake.

16 ELINOR (CONT'D) 16
It was right out there.

ANGLE ON: We see a shot of the four of them, but from the viewpoint of the middle of the lake. Ripples slowly expand from the spot across the surface of the water.

17 RANGER RABBIT 17

Good observation, Elinor. See the ripples? That means something must have splashed there a moment ago.

ANGLE ON: Back to the kids and Ranger Rabbit looking at the lake. Suddenly a cute, shimmery, silvery fish jumps out of the water in the middle of the lake! <SFX: Bloop!>

18 ELINOR 18
 (excited)
 Oh my gish! It's a fosh!

The kids <SFX: LAUGH>.

19 ELINOR (CONT'D) 19
(laughing with them)
I mean, oh my gosh! It's a fish!

20 RANGER RABBIT 20
Well spotted.

She lifts her binoculars, previously hanging around her neck, up to her eyes.

21 RANGER RABBIT (CONT'D) 21
I think it's a lake trout.

She checks her notebook.

22 RANGER RABBIT (CONT'D) 22
There sure are a lot of trout this
year - that's good.

23 ELINOR 23
 (still excited about the
 fish)
I can't believe we got to see a
fish jump out of the water!

Ari points toward the lake.

24 ARI 24
Look! There it is again!

ANGLE ON: The fish, or at least a similar-looking fish, jumps out of the water in a different part of the lake. <SFX: Bloop!>

ANGLE ON: Now all three kids peer at the water intently, waiting for the next jump.

25 OLIVE 25
Wait for it...wait for it...

ANGLE ON: The fish jumps again, this time in a different spot. <SFX: Bloop!>

ANGLE ON: The three kids point to the unexpected spot and jump up and down with excitement.

26 ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI 26
Bloop!

Olive starts quickly sketching something in her notebook.

27 ELINOR 27
I'm going to name the fish Splashy.

Olive holds up her notebook and points it at the lake, as if showing it to the fish. She has drawn a simple picture of a fish.

28 OLIVE 28
Look, Splashy! I drew you!

Olive looks down and sees Ari wriggling on the ground!

29 ARI 29
Thanks, Olive! It looks great!
(Stage whisper to Olive and Elinor:) I'm Splashy.

They <SFX: LAUGH> as Elinor helps Ari up.

30 ELINOR 30
Silly Splashy.

At this moment, a <SFX: WIND> blows in. Everyone shivers.

31 OLIVE 31
Oooh, it's really getting chilly.

32 RANGER RABBIT 32
Winter is right around the corner, kids. Let's keep hiking, that'll warm us up.

ANGLE ON: We see a longer shot of the lake with the four figures continuing their hike. The kids wave goodbye to the fish.

33 OLIVE 33
Bye, Splashy!

34 ARI 34
See you next time we come to the
lake!

35 ELINOR 35
Stay warm!

They continue excitedly following Ranger Rabbit along the lake, and in the foreground of the shot Splashy jumps out for one last splash. We TILT UP to the blue sky with the winter wind starting to blow.

CROSSFADE TO:

3. EXT. LAKESIDE - WINTER, A FEW WEEKS LATER

The shot stays on the sky, which turns from blue to white. A soft snow falls, and we TILT DOWN to see that the lake has frozen, with snow topping all of the nearby trees and plants. Ranger Rabbit emerges from the forest path, followed by Elinor, Olive, and Ari. They're bundled up - in their winter gear (The Science of Staying Warm) and the kids are wearing helmets.

They all carry ice skates (or have ice skates tied together and slung on their backs). Ranger Rabbit carries a circular sign on a stake, but we can't see what it is yet.

Elsewhere along the edge of the lake, in the background, we can see other animals hanging around, talking, preparing to skate, etc. (NB all wearing helmets).

36 ELINOR 36
I'm so excited! I hope the lake is
frozen enough to skate on!

37 RANGER RABBIT 37

I hope so, too! It's been a long wait. But before we skate, I have to make sure the ice is solid enough to be safe.

Ranger Rabbit walks a little way onto the ice, then takes out a bundle of tools (auger, measuring stick), kneels, and gets to work measuring. NOTE: she makes a small hole with her auger but the kids don't see.

ANGLE ON: The kids sit on a log and start lacing up their skates while they chat.

38 OLIVE 38
Wow. Winter's really different,
isn't it?

39 ARI 39
It sure is a lot colder.

OLIVE

And there's snow everywhere.

41 ELINOR 41
But best of all, the lake is now a
frozen skating rink ...I hope.

ANGLE ON: We still see the three kids on the log, but now we can see Ranger Rabbit working on the ice as well.

42 ELINOR (CONT'D) 42
Right, Mom?

Ranger Rabbit approaches, then plunges her sign into the ground. It's a green circle with a picture of an ice skate on it.

43	RANGER RABBIT	43
	(announcing)	
	Okay, everyone! The Lake Skating	
	Rink is officially OPEN!	

Elinor, Olive, and Ari <SFX: CHEER>. We quickly ZOOM OUT to see all of the other animals cheer as well! Some of them excitedly head toward the lake.

Elinor, Olive, and Ari join them.

MONTAGE: In a series of shots, we see animals frolicking on the ice (all with helmets).

Elinor skates by. <SFX: WHEE> She's pretty good!

Ari's struggling to stay up - Olive skates over and grabs him just before he falls

Mary and Liv hold hands and twirl each other around.

Mz. Mole skates by with ease and twirls delicately in the air, landing perfectly.

Koa skates along with his hands behind his back - he's a cool customer.

Olive gets Ari stable and he skates a few feet. He's doing it!! Elinor joins Olive who watches Ari with pride.

He skates a few more steps then <SFX: WHOOOAA> his arms start pin-wheeling as he's about to lose his balance. Just as he's about to fall, he flutters up into the air, does a flip and lands perfectly - TA-DAH!.

END MONTAGE

<SFX: LAUGHING>, Elinor, Olive, and Ari skate to the side and have a seat on the snow-covered log, where Ranger Rabbit pours hot chocolate from a Thermos into three small mugs.

44 RANGER RABBIT (CONT'D) 44
Here ya go kids.
(notices)
Oh, there's Mz. Mole - I want to
compliment her on her skating.

Ranger Rabbit goes off to talk with Mz. Mole. The kids hold their mugs and watch the lake, sipping.

45 ARI 45

Wow. It's pretty amazing to think
that this is the same lake where we
hiked a few weeks ago.

46 ELINOR 46
And where we met Splashy!

47	OLIVE	47
	In the spring, summer, and fall, the lake is full of water. But in the winter, it's solid ice! That is soooo cool!	

Suddenly Elinor <SFX: GASPS>. She looks worried. She has stopped drinking her hot chocolate and places the mug down in a pile of snow.

48 OLIVE (CONT'D) 48
What's wrong, Elinor?

49	ELINOR	49
	Remember when we saw Splashy	
	jumping in the water? But now all	
	the water is frozen...	

ARI
That's what happens in winter.

51 ELINOR 51
Yes, but if Splashy is still in the lake,
and the lake is frozen solid, what happened to Splashy?

52 OLIVE 52
Oooh, I never thought about that.

ANGLE ON: Elinor stands and walks over to the lake. Ari and Olive follow. She crouches and knocks on the ice <SFX: Knock knock!>.

53 ELINOR 53
It's solid, all right.

She turns to face her friends.

54 ELINOR (CONT'D) 54
So is Splashy okay? And what about
all of the other fish in the lake?
How can they swim? Or find food?

Ari flutters out onto the ice.

55 ARI 55
Let's take a look. Maybe we can see
inside the ice.

56 ELINOR 56
Good idea Ari, we need more
observations.

Elinor and Olive follow him. They drop to their knees and join Ari, who is already peering down into the ice.

ANGLE ON: The kids' faces looking down into the ice.

ANGLE ON: We see what the kids see, which is a fairly opaque lake surface.

57 ELINOR (CONT'D) 57
I can't see anything.

58 OLIVE 58
Me neither.

59 ARI 59
I see something: ice.

60 OLIVE 60

I know! What if we try to melt a
little of the ice so it turns into
water again?

61 ELINOR 61
We can use our hands! Our hands are
warm.

The three of them press their hands onto the ice, but just for a moment.

62 ARI 62
That's cold!

He pulls them away and exhales onto his cold fingers. Elinor and Olive do the same.

63 OLIVE 63
We didn't melt very much.

64 ARI 64
And we can't see anything.

65 ELINOR 65
I wonder what happened to Splashy.

66 OLIVE 66
OH! Maybe Splashy went south for
the winter - like the ducks we saw.

A THOUGHT BUBBLE arises, the ducks flying though the sky,
joined by flying FISH!

[illegible]

Ari flutters his wings and lifts himself off of the ice a little bit.

68 ARI (CONT'D) 68

Or bats!

69 OLIVE 69
Riiiiiight. Fish have to stay in the
water.

The THOUGHT BUBBLE bursts. Elinor and Olive follow Ari off of the ice and back to their log.

70 ELINOR 70
 (thinking hard while
 walking)
So if the fish can't leave the
water in the lake...but the lake is
frozen...

They sit on their log.

71 ELINOR (CONT'D) 71
...how are the fish okay?

She picks up her mug of hot chocolate from the snow. She brings it to her mouth for a sip, then pulls it away, looking in the mug, shocked.

72 OLIVE 72
What's wrong Elinor?

73 ELINOR 73
My hot chocolate. It's more like
cold chocolate. In fact, it's more
like ice chocolate.

ANGLE ON: She shows them the mug, and we can also see inside it. Elinor cautiously pokes the frozen drink with a finger - then notices something strange.

74 ELINOR (CONT'D) 74
Huh?

CU: Elinor's finger taps the frozen drink, and we can see that it's only *partially* frozen, with a layer of ice on top, but it's still liquid underneath.

ANGLE ON: The kids look at the mug.

75 OLIVE 75
Oh! It's frozen on top...

76 ARI 76
...but it's still liquid at the
bottom!

77 ELINOR 77
And the ice floats, so it stays at
the top.
(thinking)
Wait a minute...

THOUGHT BUBBLE - appears next to her, and we can see the following in the bubble as she describes it. We see a cutaway diagram of the lake with fish swimming in it; the top of the lake then freezes, and the fish keep swimming underneath.

78 ELINOR (CONT'D) 78
Maybe the lake is like that, too!
Maybe the "frozen" lake is only
frozen on top!

In the thought bubble, Ranger Rabbit appears and starts measuring the ice.

The kids look into the hole; their faces brighten.

88 ELINOR 88
But what do the fish do under there
all winter?

89 RANGER RABBIT 89
Oh, all kinds of things.

THOUGHT BUBBLE appears next to Ranger Rabbit, showing the same cutaway as before. The fish in the cutaway lake illustrate all of the actions Ranger Rabbit describes.

90 RANGER RABBIT (CONT'D) 90

Some bury themselves in the sand at the bottom and go to sleep. Some cuddle with their friends to stay warm. But other fish, like the trout, stay awake, move more slowly, and eat as much as they can find.

91 ELINOR 91

That is SO INTERESTING! All the
time we've been skating, there's
been a whole lake full of fish
underneath us!

The kids skate as they sing.

SONG:

92 ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI 92
ELINOR: Lakes are fun to dip your
toes in,
But in winter, they get frozen.
ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI: Ice on top,
water on the bottom.

OLIVE: Even when that ice is
strong,
Fish can live all winter long.
ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI: Ice on top,
water on the bottom.

It's Ari's turn to think of a verse, and he's having a little trouble.

ARI: Ice is nice. Ice is nice.
It's so nice...I said it twice.
ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI (giggling): Ice
on top, water on the bottom.

(MORE)

ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI (CONT'D)

ELINOR: Lakes in winter, after
autumn,

OLIVE: Full of fish, though it's
hard to spot 'em!

ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI: Have ice on
top...water on the bottom!

END SONG.

ANGLE ON: Elinor peers into the hole Ranger Rabbit has cut,
and her face lights up.

ANGLE ON: In the hole, we can see fish swimming by!

93	ELINOR	93
	Look! The fish are swimming around under the ice! (gasps) And that one looks like Splashy!	

ANGLE ON: Olive and Ari peer in the hole as well, pointing at
fish.

94	OLIVE	94
	Actually, that one also looks like Splashy.	

95	ARI	95
	That one, too.	

96	ELINOR	96
	(giggling) I guess a lot of fish look like Splashy. We're glad you're okay, Splashies! See you in the spring!	

Elinor, Olive, and Ari race out onto the frozen lake while
Ranger Rabbit keeps working. We ZOOM OUT to show all of the
skating animals they've joined, then PAN DOWN through the ice
into Ranger Rabbit's hole to the liquid lake below, where we
can see a whole aquatic community concealed under the top
layer of ice - moving slowly in the cold water, but still
there.

FADE OUT, THE END.

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