

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, Javier, Mary and Liv, Mz. Mole.

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

Props - Ranger Rabbit's backpack, 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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SECOND DRAFT: September 20, 2019

1. EXT. FOREST PATH - DAY

Open on one of the last few brown leaves falling off of a deciduous tree. The leaf drifts on a late fall breeze, then flutters by ELINOR, OLIVE, and ARI, who are playing and chasing each other down a path in the woods while RANGER RABBIT hikes down the path. They wear their autumn clothes, and there is no snow on the ground yet. Ranger Rabbit wears a backpack and has binoculars around her neck.

Elinor tags Ari.

1	ELINOR	1	*
	Tag! You're it!		*

Ari stops running.

2	ARI	2	*
	I thought I was already it.		*

3	ELINOR	3	*
	Were you? Oops! Then...I guess I'm it now!		*

She tags Ari again.

4	ELINOR (CONT'D)	4	*
	And now you're it!		*

Olive joins them.

5	OLIVE	5	*
	Wait, wasn't I it?		*

Olive smiles.

6	OLIVE (CONT'D)	6	*
	Did we forget to keep track of who's it again?		*

7	ARI	7	*
	(shaking his head)		*
	Playing tag with three "its" is weird.		*

Elinor laughs, then walks a few paces ahead to catch up to her mother.

8	ELINOR	8	*
	Mom, where are we going?		*

9	RANGER RABBIT	9	*
	You'll see. We're almost there.		*

2. EXT. LAKESIDE - DAY

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

10 RANGER RABBIT 10
Here we are!

11 ELINOR 11
We're at Mossy Lake! *

<SFX: ALL RIGHT, WE DID IT CHEERING WALLA> Ranger Rabbit puts her backpack down and removes a few instruments. *

12 RANGER RABBIT 12
That's right! It's the biggest lake
in Animal Town. *

She 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. *

13 ARI 13
What are you doing, Ranger Rabbit?

14 RANGER RABBIT 14
Just checking on how things are
going with the lake, Ari. I keep
seasonal data - that means I come
out here every summer, fall,
winter, and spring to write down
observations. *

Olive walks over and joins Ari.

15 OLIVE 15
(smiling, holding up her
own notebook and pencil)
I love writing down observations. *
That's my favorite thing to do with
observations! *

Ranger Rabbit dips her thermometer in the water and checks it. *

16 RANGER RABBIT 16
Well, the water is definitely
getting colder... *

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

17 RANGER RABBIT (CONT'D) 17 *
And we still have a few ducks that *
haven't flown south for the winter. *

She makes a note of it, and Olive copies her. Ari dips a *
finger in the water. *

18 ARI 18 *
Brr! That water's pretty cold! *
Better hurry up, ducks. *

At that moment a few ducks rise up out of the water and start *
flying away. *

19 OLIVE 19 *
Wow!! There they go. *

ANGLE ON: Elinor waves to the departing ducks. *

20 ELINOR 20 *
Bye ducks! Have a good trip!! *

Suddenly Elinor hears a <SFX: Bloop!>. She looks over in the *
direction where she heard it, but she sees nothing, so she *
turns back to watch the ducks. Then there is another <SFX: *
Bloop!>. This time she's a little quicker to look for its *
source, but again she sees nothing. Elinor shrugs, and just *
as she's turning back to the ducks, the <SFX: Bloop!> comes a *
third time. This time she thinks she sees something. *

21 ELINOR (CONT'D) 21 *
Olive! Ari! Look at this! *

22 OLIVE 22 *
What are you looking at, Elinor? *

23 ELINOR 23
(still staring at the
lake)
I saw a splash. And it sounded
like, *bloop!*

Ranger Rabbit joins them. Elinor points across the lake.

24 ELINOR (CONT'D) 24
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.

25	RANGER RABBIT	25	
	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!>			
26	ELINOR	26	
	(excited)		
	It's a fish!		*
27	OLIVE	27	*
	Either that, or it's one weird-looking duck.		*
			*
The kids <SFX: LAUGH>.			
28	RANGER RABBIT	28	*
	Well spotted.		
She lifts her binoculars, previously hanging around her neck, up to her eyes.			
ANGLE ON: We see through Ranger Rabbit's binoculars, so we can easily see when another fish jumps <SFX: Bloop!>.			
29	ELINOR (V.O.)	29	*
	Another one!		*
30	RANGER RABBIT	30	
	I think that fish is a lake trout.		*
She checks her notebook.			
31	RANGER RABBIT (CONT'D)	31	
	There sure are a lot of trout this year - that's good. It means the lake is a healthy place for the fish to live.		*
			*
			*
32	ELINOR	32	
	(still excited about the fish)		
	I can't believe the fish jumped out of the water, and we got to see them! Why do they do that?		*
			*
			*
33	RANGER RABBIT	33	*
	They're probably trying to catch bugs on the surface.		*
			*

Ari points toward the lake.

34	ARI	34	
	Look! Another fish!		*
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.			
35	OLIVE	35	
	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.			
36	ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI	36	
	<i>Bloop!</i>		
Olive starts quickly sketching something in her notebook.			
37	ELINOR	37	
	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.			
38	OLIVE	38	
	Look, Splashy! I drew you!		
We PAN to see Ari puckering his lips like a fish and wiggling his fingers like gills!			
39	ARI	39	
	(in a fish voice)		*
	Thanks, Olive! It looks great!		
	(Stage whisper to Olive and Elinor:) I'm Splashy.		
They <SFX: LAUGH> as Ari puts his hands down.			
40	ELINOR	40	
	Silly Splashy.		
At this moment, a <SFX: WIND> blows in. Everyone shivers.			
41	OLIVE	41	
	Oooh, it's really getting chilly.		

42	RANGER RABBIT	42	
	Winter is right around the corner, kids. Let's hike back to the ranger station.		* *

	ANGLE ON: We see a longer shot of Mossy Lake with the four figures continuing their hike. The kids wave goodbye to the fish.	*
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43	OLIVE	43	
	Bye, Splashy!		

44	ARI	44	
	See you next time we come to the lake!		

45	ELINOR	45	
	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	*
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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).

46	ELINOR	46	
	I'm so excited! I can't wait to go skating on the lake!		* *

47	RANGER RABBIT	47	
	Me too! It's been a long wait. But before we skate, stay here while I make sure the ice is safe enough to skate on. Wait here.		* * * *

Ranger Rabbit ties a rope to her waist, the other end of which is tied to a tree. She 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.

48 OLIVE 48
Wow. The last time we came to Mossy Lake, it was fall. *

49 ARI 49
It sure is a lot colder now that it's winter. *

50 ELINOR 50
And the lake is 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.

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

51 RANGER RABBIT 51
(announcing)
Okay, everyone! The Mossy 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.

Javier Moose 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> falls down again and slides the rest of the way to Olive and Elinor on his bottom.

*
*
*

END MONTAGE

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

*
*

52 RANGER RABBIT (CONT'D) 52
Great skating, kids! Here, have
some hot chocolate.

*
*

<SFX: THANKS, AWESOME WALLA> Ranger Rabbit leaves to monitor the lake. The kids hold their mugs and watch the lake, sipping.

*
*

53 ARI 53
It's pretty amazing to think that
this is the same lake where we
hiked in the fall.

*
*

54 ELINOR 54
And where we met Splashy!

55 OLIVE 55
In the spring, summer, and fall,
the lake is full of water. But in
the winter, it turns to 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.

56 OLIVE (CONT'D) 56
What's wrong, Elinor?

57 ELINOR 57
If the lake has turned to
ice...what happened to Splashy?

*
*

58 ARI 58
Huh?

*

59 ELINOR 59
The fish we saw in the fall. It was
in the lake, but now the lake is
completely frozen.

*
*
*

60 OLIVE 60
Oooh, I never thought about that.

ANGLE ON: Elinor stands and walks over to the lake. Ari and Olive leave their hot chocolates on the log and follow. *
(They're all still wearing skates, but the snow is deep *
enough that the blades crunch into it, and they can walk with *
no difficulty.) She crouches and knocks on the ice <SFX: *
Knock knock!>.

61 ELINOR 61
It feels solid, all right. *

She turns to face her friends. *

62 ELINOR (CONT'D) 62
So is Splashy okay? Or did Splashy *
get frozen, too? *

A THOUGHT BUBBLE appears, in which Elinor imagines a cross- *
section of the lake, populated with swimming fish. The lake *
freezes <SFX: quick freeze/crystallization>, and the fish *
stop swimming.) *

63 OLIVE 63 *
OH! Maybe Splashy went south for *
the winter - like the ducks we saw. *

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

64 ARI 64 *
Uhh, Olive, fish can't fly like *
birds. *

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

65 ARI (CONT'D) 65 *
Or bats! *

66 OLIVE 66 *
Riiight. Fish have to stay in the *
water. *

Elinor and Olive follow Ari off of the ice and back to their *
log. *

Ari flutters out onto the ice.

67 ARI 67
Let's take a look. Maybe we can see
inside the ice.

68	ELINOR	68	
	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.			
69	ELINOR (CONT'D)	69	
	I can't see anything.		
70	OLIVE	70	
	Me neither.		
71	ARI	71	
	I see something: ice.		
72	OLIVE	72	
	I know! What if we try to melt a little of the ice so it turns into water again? My trunk is nice and warm.		* *
	She starts to rub her trunk comically all over the ice.		*
73	ELINOR	73	
	Is it melting?		*
	Olive Lifts up her trunk. The cold has numbed it, and she speaks as though with a stuffy nose.		* *
74	OLIVE	74	
	Dot really. Ad dow by trung is cold. (Not really. And now my trunk is cold.)		* * * *
	She rubs her trunk to warm it up.		*
75	ARI	75	
	(peering at the patch where Olive used her trunk)		* * * *
	And we still can't see anything.		*
76	ELINOR	76	
	I wonder what happened to Splashy. And what about all of the other fish in the lake? How can they swim? Or find food?		* * * *

77	OLIVE	77	*
	Let's explore the ice. Maybe we can figure it out.		*
			*
	They stand up from their crouched positions. Ari is a little shaky, so the girls support him as they traverse the ice.		*
			*
	ANGLE ON: The kids approach the hole Ranger Rabbit made earlier. It's a small hole, just wide enough to peer through, but not wide enough for a hand.		*
			*
78	ARI	78	*
	(pointing at the hole)		*
	Look!		*
	They arrive at the hole and stand around it.		*
79	ELINOR	79	*
	It's a hole! Where did that come from?		*
			*
80	OLIVE	80	*
	I think I saw your mom make that hole when she was testing the ice.		*
			*
81	ELINOR	81	*
	Holes are PERFECT for observations!		*
	They crouch down, and Elinor peers into the hole.		*
	CU: We see what Elinor sees: at the bottom of the hole is liquid water! Elinor sits up.		*
			*
82	ELINOR (CONT'D)	82	*
	Whaaaaat?		*
	Olive and Ari try to peer in the hole, comically moving their heads around each other to try to see.		*
			*
83	ELINOR (CONT'D)	83	*
	There's WATER down there!		*
84	ARI	84	*
	You're right!		*
85	OLIVE	85	*
	There's water UNDER the ice!		*
	Ranger Rabbit returns, carrying Elinor's mug.		*
86	ELINOR	86	*
	Mom! Mom! We see water in that hole!		*
			*

87	OLIVE	87	*
	Does that mean the lake is still		*
	full of water...		*
88	ARI	88	*
	...and the ice is just on top?		*
89	RANGER RABBIT	89	*
	That's right!		*
	A THOUGHT BUBBLE appears, showing a cutaway of the lake and		*
	illustrating the following.		*
90	RANGER RABBIT (CONT'D)	90	*
	Only part of the lake freezes into		*
	ice. And because ice floats, that		*
	part stays on top.		*
	She hands Elinor her mug.		*
91	RANGER RABBIT (CONT'D)	91	*
	Your hot chocolate did the same		*
	thing. You left it in the snow, and		*
	it started to freeze.		*
92	ELINOR	92	*
	(looking at the mug)		*
	It's more like <i>cold</i> chocolate. In		*
	fact, it's more like <i>ice</i> chocolate.		*
	CU: We can see inside the mug. Elinor cautiously pokes the		*
	frozen drink with a finger, and a circular disc of ice bobs		*
	and floats in the drink.		*
	ANGLE ON: Elinor looks at the mug.		*
93	ELINOR (CONT'D)	93	*
	Oh, I see! It's frozen on top...but		*
	it's still liquid at the bottom!		*
	And the ice floats on top.		*
	She holds out the mug to Ari and Olive.		*
94	ELINOR (CONT'D)	94	*
	See?		*
	THOUGHT BUBBLE - appears next to Ranger Rabbit, 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.		*

95	RANGER RABBIT	95	*
	Exactly. That's why I drilled that		*
	hole in the ice - I had to see how		*
	thick it was to know if it was safe		*
	to skate on.		*
	The thought bubble disappears.		*
96	ELINOR	96	*
	So if there's still water under the		*
	ice...(gasps). The fish could still		*
	be swimming around down there!		*
97	RANGER RABBIT	97	*
	I can show you if you'd like. I		*
	need to make the hole bigger to		*
	monitor the trout population.		*
	She makes the hole a little bigger with a chisel. ANGLE ON:		*
	The kids take turns looking into the hole; their faces		*
	brighten.		
98	ELINOR	98	*
	Look! The fish are swimming around		*
	under the ice! (gasps) And that one		*
	looks like Splashy!		*
	Elinor moves out of the way, and Olive peers down in the hole		*
	as well, pointing at fish.		*
99	OLIVE	99	*
	Actually, that one also looks like		*
	Splashy.		*
	She moves aside, and Ari gets a turn.		*
100	ARI	100	*
	That one, too.		*
101	ELINOR	101	*
	(giggling)		*
	I guess a lot of fish look like		*
	Splashy.		*
102	RANGER RABBIT	102	*
	See? Animals find lots of ways to		*
	survive when the weather changes.		*
103	OLIVE	103	*
	But what do the fish do under there		
	all winter?		
104	RANGER RABBIT	104	
	Oh, all kinds of things.		

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

105 RANGER RABBIT (CONT'D) 105

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.

106 ELINOR 106

That is SO INTERESTING!

107 OLIVE 107

All the time we've been skating...

108 ARI 108

...there's been a whole lake full
of fish underneath us!

The kids skate as they sing. SONG: *

109 ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI 109

ELINOR: Lakes are fun to dip your
toes in,
But in winter, they get frozen.
ALL: Ice, ice, ice on the
top...water on the bottom!

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

ALL: Each animal has a special
reason
It can change with the changing
season,
ELINOR: Even when the weather's
freezin'!

Ari's turn to think of a verse 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,
ice, ice on the top...water on the
bottom!

(MORE)

ELINOR, OLIVE, ARI (CONT'D)

ELINOR: Lakes in winter, after
autumn,

OLIVE: Full of fish if you can spot
'em!

ARI: Grab your ice skates if you
brought 'em!

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

END SONG.

ANGLE ON: Elinor looks up at Ranger Rabbit.

110	ELINOR	110
	I'm glad Splashy and the other fish	
	are okay! When the weather changed,	
	and the lake froze, they found a	
	way to survive.	

ANGLE ON: We pull out a bit to see that Olive is already
writing in her notebook.

111	OLIVE	111
	And I'm glad we could help monitor	
	the trout population.	
	(thinking)	
	Monitor...I like that word.	

ANGLE ON: We pull out a bit more to see Ari skidding past
them across the ice, starting to lose control. <SFX: WHOOOAA
WALLA>

He slips and accidentally launches himself in the air, but
before he can hit the ice, he flutters his wings and keeps
himself hovering above it.

112	ARI	112
	And I'm glad I have wings! Fish can	
	stay under the ice - I'll stay a	
	little bit over it!	

They laugh. We ZOOM OUT to show all of the skating animals,
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.