

Georgia's own groundhog predicts an early spring

From staff and press dispatches

"General Lee," Georgia's version of the groundhog "Punxsutawney Phil," predicted an early spring Thursday when he emerged from his burrow and failed to see his shadow. But Punxsutawney Phil saw a shadow that means there are six more weeks of winter ahead.

"The sun actually hadn't hit his burrow yet" when the groundhog emerged about 8 a.m., said Art Rilling, manager of the Yellow River Wildlife Game Ranch in Lilburn where General Lee lives with his mate, "Scarlett."

"This gives us our official prediction," said Rilling. "Spring is just around the corner."

Groundhog Day legend says there will be six more weeks of winter weather if the groundhog sees its shadow. Rilling maintains that his groundhogs are better prognosticators than Punxsutawney Phil, even though they are newer at the job than the famous Pennsylvania animal.

The famous Phil came out of his burrow Thursday morning and saw a "thin gray shadow over his right shoulder," said James Means, president of the



Punxsutawney Groundhog Club, which sponsors Phil's annual prediction.

An added attraction to the prediction this year was a groundhog wedding between Phil and Philomena, a girl groundhog from the Philadelphia Zoo.



Associated Press

Art Rilling stays in touch with media reporters from his Lilburn's Yellow River Wildlife Game Ranch where "General Lee," left, failed to see his shadow upon emerging from his burrow Thursday.