

# Signs of Spring Scavenger Hunt

All Ages

As winter loosens its grip on nature, spring rushes in with all sorts of exciting changes. It is a wonderful time to go outside and take in the new sounds, sights and smells that spring brings. It is a great experience to share with your family and a chance to learn more about your 'naturehood'. Try a Spring Scavenger Hunt (See page 2.)

It is warming up out there! Explore how the sun's heat warms the earth. Use all your senses. Feel the warmth, hear the melting, see the evidence of radiant heat all around you.

After the quiet of winter, there is suddenly lots to hear in nature. The winter birds, including the Screech Owls, are calling for mates and claiming territories. Great Horned Owls already have owlets by mid-March, and families can be noisy.

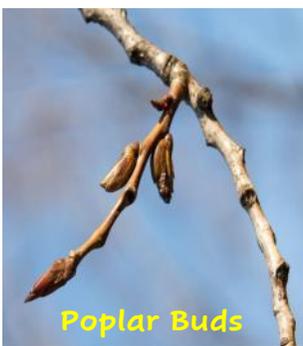
As the migratory birds return, their songs add to mix along with the woodpeckers knocking, spring peepers peeping, toads trilling, and the list goes on. For tips on listening, see our **Bird Songs—Getting Started** activity and **Make a Sound Map**.



Sapcicle

There is lots to see as life stirs and colour returns, like the first insects, often a dusting of springtails on the snow, or the first butterfly. Adult Mourning Cloak butterflies, after wintering in dead trees, are on the hunt for sap to drink or a 'sapcicle' to lick. Lots of critters enjoy the sapcicles which form where tree branches have broken and sap dips out.

Feel spring when you touch colourful lichens or green mosses. Explore the rubbery leaves of some spring plants, like the Trout Lily. These leaves help keep moisture in over the winter. The Coltsfoot flowers first, growing leaves later when there is little chance of freezing.



Poplar Buds

On a spring hike you can't help but see the buds on the trees. Big and fat, they are ready to open into leaves. Beech trees have long, elegant buds while Ash buds look like chocolate chips! Hickory buds are yellow, and the Yellow Birch are pretty, two-toned buds. The poplar trees coat their buds with a sticky resin to protect them in the winter. (In the fall, bees use the resin to seal their hives to keep out intruders, microscopic and otherwise.) When the poplar buds open, the resin releases a wonderful smell. Something to sniff on your spring walks.

Before the leaves emerge, it is easy to see woodpecker holes in trees. While feeding, each type of woodpecker makes a different hole; from the Downy Woodpecker's small quarter-sized holes to the large, rectangular holes of the big Pileated Woodpecker. Sap oozing from some of the holes is welcome food for many critters in the spring.

Spring is the season of renewal. Get out there and take a fresh, new look at nature.



**Caution**—stay back from water in the spring. Banks and shorelines are not stable and often slippery. Ice is thinning and treacherous. Meltwater makes streams and rivers fast flowing and dangerous. **Stay away, stay safe!**



Coltsfoot

# Spring Scavenger Hunt

## I saw

- evidence the sun is heating things up (melt-ring around trees, rocks etc.)
- 2 differently-shaped holes made by woodpeckers
- a bird I have not seen all winter
- animal tracks going from the snow to mud or vice versa
- evidence of vole tunnels that were once under the snow
- a Mourning Cloak butterfly
- a group of insects
- a 'sapcicle' hanging from a tree
- a bird, animal or insect eating a 'sapcicle'
- Reindeer lichen
- a flower



## I heard

- the drip, drip, drip of melting snow and ice
- A woodpecker knocking
- three different types of birds calling
- an owl call
- an amphibian calling, spring peepers peeping, a toad trilling (may have to wait until April)



## I felt

- the warmth of the sun on my skin
- soft green moss on a rock
- a rubbery leaf (Trout Lily)
- the sticky resin on a poplar bud
- crispy flakes of lichen on a tree
- inside a hole made by a woodpecker



## I smelled

- poplar/cottonwood buds
- Maple sap boiling into syrup
- fresh spring air
- cedar or evergreen needles

## I tasted

- Yellow Birch twigs— minty yum!
- sweetwater—maple sap
- Maple syrup, taffy or sugar

