
JUNIOR NATURALISTS

SPRING

The abundant snow of winter has melted and formed numerous potholes all over. Sure, it still freezes at night and, in the early morning, I can try to break the thin crust of ice by throwing a couple of rocks at it. They break through and make series of ripples in the water underneath . . .

Warming up in the morning sun, I go for a walk and then . . . woo-ho, woo-ho . . . There they are! Whistling Swans! Sure sign of spring, forming pure white Vs in the sky . . . In a little while will come the geese and ducks, then the songbirds . . . Now my heart is warming up . . . and I have tears in my eyes. After this long winter, it isn't too soon! It makes me feel like exploring for spring everywhere! Horned Larks, with their delicate tinkling song, are being flushed more and more often from the roads as we drive. And here is a ground squirrel already, poking its nose through the opening of its hole, through the snow! The hole is laced with tracks similar to a mouse's but larger: , " ,

There, near that slough . . .! I run over. Pussy-willows! I cut one or two small branches for my house. Do you know that if you don't put them in water they will stay nice for several years, just as they were when you found them? If you put them in water, the catkins will develop and mature, and you will be able to tell if they are male (powdery) or female (sticky). The shrub you took them from produces only one kind: it is, itself, male or female.

Willows shade well and the snow underneath and in between them is full of bush rabbit (Snowshoe Hare) tracks. Oh! There goes one! Its back is turning brown already! I guess it must feel spring too!

Black-capped Chickadees are singing their spring song as well as their usual chickadee-dee-dee that makes them so easy to identify. It comes from that aspen bluff . . . It's a pair, working hard at excavating a nest hole in a dead stump, about 7 feet from the ground. Apparently, they build a new one each year, I wonder why . . . Opportunists like the House Wren, with its short tail cocked over its back, often raise a family in their abandoned holes.

Well, it's time to go back home. At least, now I know I will work a thousand times better, just because spring is here . . .

You can see spring too, and smell it when the snow melts and the grass and other plants start to grow. Here are some spring birds and flowers. Guess in which order the following birds will return this spring. Then, keep a record of the order of their return and count five points for each one you get right.

To do this, list the 11 species in a column. You may add more to make the game more challenging if you wish. On the left side, number the birds from 1 to 11 in the order of expected arrival date. Then, on the right, number the birds in the order you actually see them. When the migration is over, count 5 points for each bird which has the same number on both sides. Your maximum score for the 11 species will be 55.

You can also play this game for the blooming time of flowers. Good luck!

Birds

Crow, Red-winged Blackbird, Mountain Bluebird, Horned Lark, Western Meadowlark, Yellow-Rumped Warbler (Myrtle), Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Ring-billed Gull, Franklin's Gull, American Robin.

Flowers

WILD

False Solomon Seal (*Smilacina stellata*)
Field Chickweed (*Cerastium arvense*)
Prairie Crocus (*Anemone patens*)
Nodding Onion (*Allium cernuum*)
Silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*)
Golden Bean (*Thermopsis rhombifolia*)
Moss Phlox (*Phlox hoodii*)
Narrow-leaved Puccoon (*Lithospermum angustifolium*)

GARDEN

Bleedingheart (*Dicentra spectabilis*)
Snow-in summer (*Cerastium tomentosum*)
Columbine (*Aquilegia*)
Lupine (*Lupinus*)
Phlox (*Phlox*)
Tulip (*Tulipa*)
Lily of the Valley (*Convallaria majalis*)



Spring run-off

Gary W. Seib

PHOTO CONTEST

I am pleased to say that the 2 winners of the photo contest did send a note about their pictures.

Here is what Nigel Caulkett has to say:

The picture of the Calla Lily was taken in Pasquia Hills. After a hike into the hills, we found the lilies growing in a small lake. After about 5 minutes of lying down in a patch of nettles, the sun finally caught the lily and I took the picture.

and Sean Morrissey:

I took this picture in the spring 1981, while banding Great Horned Owls with Dr. Stuart Houston, south of St. Louis, Sask. The young owl had fallen out of the tree and was sitting at the bottom of it. After banding it, we put it on a branch close to the nest, where the parents

could find it and where it would be out of reach of a hungry coyote.

I have many fine pictures taken on this trip and very fond memories to go with each. I would like to thank Dr. Houston for giving me a better understanding of the Great Horned Owl.

I have also had the privilege of banding Marsh, Red-tailed, Cooper's and Ferruginous Hawks with him.

I was also able to help John Polson with his study of the Richardson's Merlins, but that is a different story.

I hope that we will hear from more Juniors in the future. Have a good spring! — Paule B. Hjertaas, 919 Cook Crescent, Regina, Saskatchewan. S4X 2L9.