



## Pocket Ranger® Blog

We connect with nature lovers, park goers & outdoor enthusiasts to promote free, state-sanctioned State Park & Wildlife apps.

### First Signs of Spring

The first signs of spring are all around us. Bees flocking to flowers, [butterflies](#) shedding their old skin, and [birds singing in the morning](#). Spring blossoms gradually, but before we know it we're in the middle of a flower field, so slow down, and take notice. Invite the family and the kids on a nature hunt to see who can spot the first signs of spring.



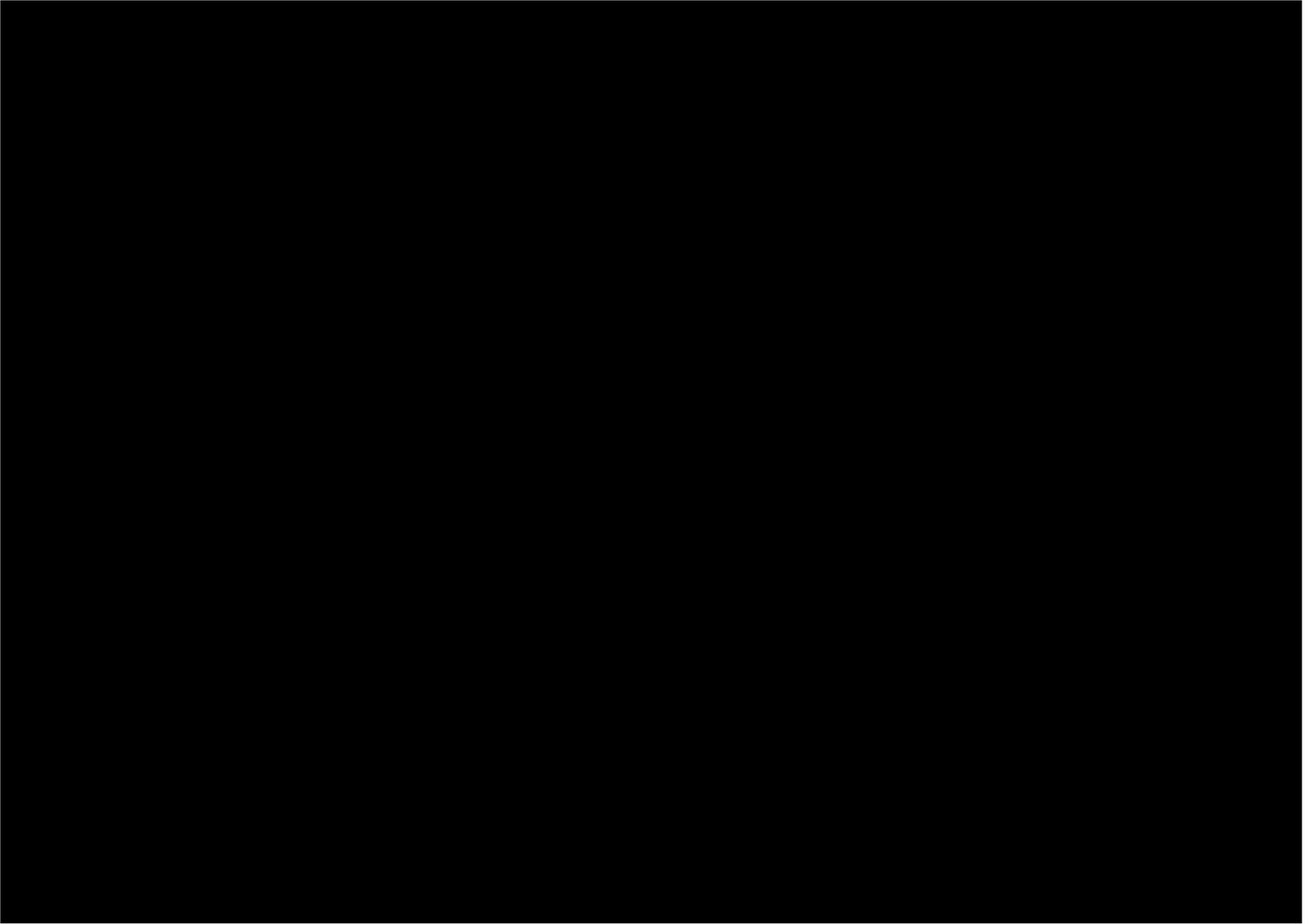
*Image: [cdn.adirondackexplorer.org](http://cdn.adirondackexplorer.org)*

## **What Springs means**

Spring is the season when plant species grow, animal activity increases, and most important, the soil reaches the right temperature for micro flora to flourish.

Spring is known as the Vernal Equinox in the Northern Hemisphere. The first day of spring is March 20, 2015 and continues through April and May with some areas starting later in the year. In the Southern Hemisphere during March the equinox is fall. On this day all over the world, day and night are approximately equal, meaning the dividing line between day and night becomes vertical, connecting the North and South Poles. The sun rises exactly in the east and sets in the west. When spring arrives you'll notice earlier

sunrises and later sunsets, so that means more time spent outdoors! See below a year in 12 seconds.



**Spring is in the air!**

Image: <http://beauty-places.com>



*Image: <http://beauty-places.com>*

Apart from the noticeably sunnier days, there's a freshness of spring: petrichor (earthy smell) emanates from grassy knolls. All around, nature is humming with life.

With spring comes the heavy rains, and this is no coincidence, as water is needed to carry necessary nutrients from the soil through plants. Essential minerals and chemicals are dissolved with water and transported. Rain is important for the survival of humans and animals since they feed on many of those plants.

Notice the trees; they're beginning to show life. Water maples and red maples are first to show signs of budding. In a few weeks dead branches will start growing buds at the end of their twigs, and soon burst into leaves. Early blooming trees include redbuds, magnolias, Norway maples, and rhododendrons. The tree blossoms are pollinated by insects and the wind. The earlier plants bloom, the quicker they'll get pollinated.

## Brave flowers



*Image: <http://1.bp.blogspot.com>*

Some plants flower immediately after snow melting or soil thawing. For example, the Glory-of-the-Snow, an alpine plant, gets ready in the previous season so it can show off its flowers as soon as snow starts melting. Forest wildflowers take advantage of the sunlight before the bigger trees shade them by pushing shoots above the ground during spring. Some early wildflower bloomers include: Cutleaf Toothwort, Red Puccoon, Vir-

ginia Bluebells, Trout Lily, and more!

The growth of plants provides a place for butterflies, bees and other small animals to find shelter and food. Larger plants and trees also provide a place to hide from predators and a place for nesting. It's almost as if nature wakes up from its long slumber to take care of its offsprings.

## Animals come out to play



Spring is a time when animals come out from their hidden nooks to mate and migrate. How do animals know its spring? Environmental cues tell them to change their behavior to fit the particular season. Adjusting their habits helps them survive. It's a matter of life and death, knowing when to have offspring for example. One environmental cue birds use is the length of day to adjust their daily activities.

On the first warm days of March, be on the look out for [butterflies](#) leaving their chrysalis after having fully grown to start trying out their young wings. Depending on the region, some of the first to appear are Mourning Cloaks, Eastern Commas, Cabbage Whites, and Spring Azures. Also, worker bees will be making the rounds seeking nectar and pollen from spring flowers. Bees are responsible for pollinating trees, shrubs and flowers. Without them we wouldn't be able eat fruits produced from plants and trees, since they're the main pollinators.

After [surviving winter](#), songbirds come out to play, especially in the morning. Spring marks the beginning of mating, feeding, and nesting season when food availability increases, snow melts and the rain brings an abundance of water. This is a great time for them to migrate back to the winter homes they left. Blackbirds, sparrows, mourning doves are often the first to make an appearance. If you're in an area with abundant trees, you may hear woodpeckers drumming. As for ducks, mallards, black ducks, and wood ducks are usually the first to be seen. Late and early spring are both great times for raptor-watching. Owls make their early spring appearance with a chorus of hooting, as a way to get ready for the breeding cycle.

Image: <http://www.collegegreenmag.com>



*Image: [www.collegegreenmag.com](http://www.collegegreenmag.com)*

Some animals like bears, hedgehogs, woodchucks, bats and ground squirrels hibernate through winter, and finally come out for spring. By doing this they're able to save energy, and live off stored fat. During winter they slowed down their activities, going out only a few times. In the chipmunk's case, its heart rate declines about 350 beats per minute to 4 beats per minute during hibernation. Once spring begins, these animals get moving by searching for food, marking their territory, and finding mates.

Explore the first signs of spring, document them through photos and share them with our social media sites ([instagram](#) and [twitter](#)). And be sure to check out the wildlife viewing option in all of our [Pocket Ranger® Mobile Apps!](#)

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