

Spring Fling

Grade levels: K-3

In a Nutshell

Through sensory awareness experiences, students will explore the spring season including its colors, shapes, and sounds. Investigations of soil textures, temperatures, and smells will also be conducted. Through a simple experiment with a “frozen” salamander, students will find out where the warmest spots may be found in the learning site. Students will also learn about some springtime activities that are important in the lives of plants and animals.

Objectives

After completing this unit, students will be able to:

- Describe at least five things that give us clues about springs arrival.
- Draw or describe at least two springtime activities in the lives of animals, and two activities in the lives of plants that are important for survival.
- Predict where they might find the warmest and coolest, and wettest and driest, places at the learning site in springtime.
- Identify at least three sounds commonly heard in springtime.

Spring Fling Pre-visit Activities

The following materials are aids to help prepare your students for their visit to the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station. The vocabulary list contains terms and concepts your students will encounter in their visit. Please modify the definitions as needed. The activities listed below are merely options – it is not necessary to do them all or follow any particular order. Keep in mind that your students' learning experiences at CWES will be enhanced if they are familiar with these concepts and terms prior to the on-site activities.

Activity #1

With your students, brainstorm signs of spring that they can find on their school grounds. This may include: there is no more snow on the playground, there are more birds in a nearby forest, it is warm enough to wear fewer layers, daylight lasts longer, their parents are opening the windows at home, the chipmunks have come out of hibernation, etc. Have them draw pictures to compare school (or home) in the winter to school (or home) in the spring. Talk about the differences that they've drawn.

Activity #2

Take your students outdoors for a listening hike. Find a quiet spot on school grounds where they can stand still and listen for signs of spring. Make a list of what they've found. You can do this over a couple of weeks and compare the sounds as time passes. Another option is to have them do this in their own backyard and bring the list to school to compare to what their classmates find.

Activity #3

Have students go outside each day and write a list of how many birds they see (they can estimate this.) Morning is the best time to do this. As time goes on, they should be seeing more and more birds. Talk to the students about why this is. You can compare their lists to the bird list Aldo Leopold wrote in Sand County Almanac. There are a number of activities you could do along with this list.

1. Listen to bird tapes in class to learn the birdcalls. You could then go outside and listen to them.
2. Get some bird books out of the library and have the students look at them to figure out when birds should be coming back to Wisconsin. Talk about migration with them. If they can recognize any of the birds they see outside of their windows, talk about whether that bird came back "on time", whether it was early, or whether it was late. What are some reasons why they would be here at different times (colder or warmer winter than usual, less food supply where they were for winter, daylight savings time, etc.)?
3. Have the students access migration lists published on the Internet. Many organizations post bird lists throughout the year. Some of these are listed on the Resources page.
4. Have the students post their own bird lists on your school website. They can then compare what they find next year to this year.

Spring Fling Post-visit Activities

A visit to the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station can be a school-year highlight for both students and their educators. We feel the knowledge and concepts gained during a Station visit apply outside the Station as well. The following activities will allow students to expand their knowledge and help them incorporate those lessons into their everyday life. Feel free to pick from and modify the activities as best suits your group.

Activity #1

Remind your students that while at the Station they used “frozen” salamanders to find the warmest areas. Have them hypothesize where the warmest areas in their schoolyard might be. Use a thermometer to test their predictions. Discuss why these areas might be warmer than others (more sunlight, protected from wind, etc.)

Activity #2

Have students keep a running list of the sounds that they hear and the number of birds that they see over the course of a week. This might be as they walk to school, during recess, or at their homes. Compare numbers from week to week and talk about why there might be more animals, as the weather gets warmer.

Activity #3

“Adopt a Bird”

Have the students pick a ‘class’ bird and research it – what does it look like, how big is it, what does it eat, where does it live, etc. Bring in a world map and learn its migration route. Draw this on the map so the students can see where their bird has been for the last few months, and how far it flew to get back to them. You could do this with several birds and compare their routes – did one fly further than another? Why might they have done this (different food needs, competition, etc)?

Activity #4

Use the attached crossword puzzle to help students review the vocabulary and concepts that they learned at the Station. The key is located on the Resources page.

Spring Fling Resources

Resources about Bird Migration

Bird Migration

Information about migration, survival needs, habitats, and bird migration

<http://www.nuthatch.birdnature.com/migration.html>

National Audubon Society

Facts about bird migration

<http://north.audubon.org/facts.html>

Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota

Migration data for raptors, including migration maps

<http://www.raptor.cvm.umn.edu/>

Spring and Fall Migration Table

Listed by state, this site includes common and Latin names for birds, and arrival and departure dates

<http://www.birdnature.com/timetable.html>

Additional Resources

Bates, John. A Northwoods Companion, Spring and Summer. Mercer, Wisconsin. Manitowish River Press, c1997.

Biesiot, Elizabeth. Natural Treasures: Field Guide for Kids. Boulder, Colo.: Denver Museum of Natural History: R. Rinehart Publishers : Distributed in the U.S. and Canada by Publishers Group West, c1996.

Leopold, Aldo. Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There. New York, Oxford Univ. Press, 1949

Peterson, Roger Tory. Peterson Field Guides. Houghton Mifflin Co.

Key to Crossword Puzzle

Across

2. Thaw
7. Thermometer
8. Frog

Down

1. Sight
3. Warmer
4. Migrate
5. Spring
6. Cold

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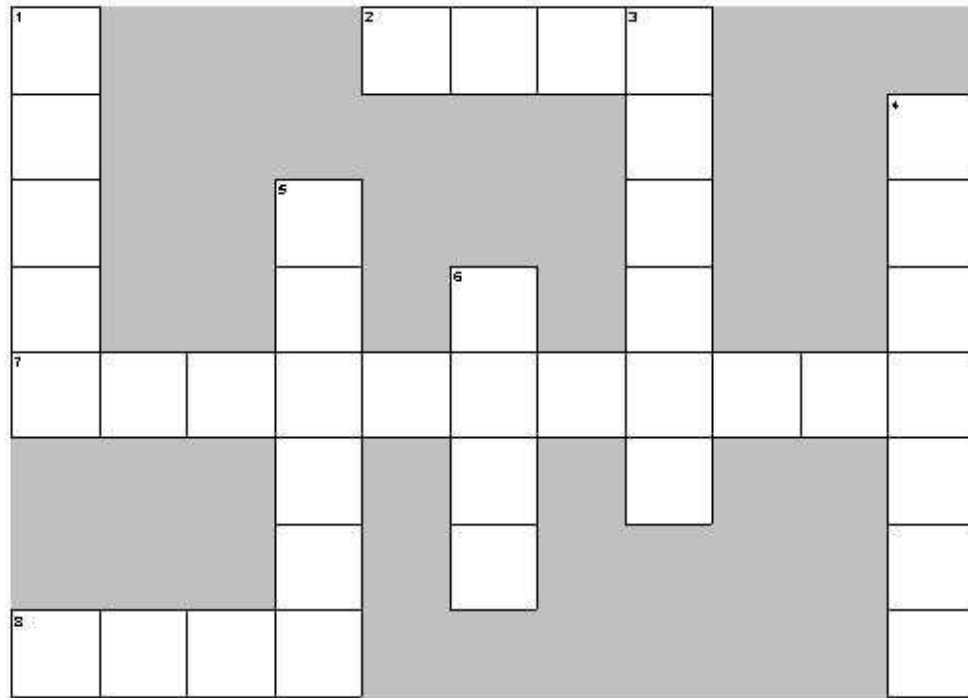
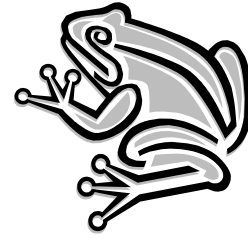
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Post-visit Activities

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Across

2. When air warms up, the ground starts to _____, or unfreeze.
7. What tool is used to measure temperature?
8. Each _____ croaks a different sound.

Down

1. The five senses are hearing, touch, smell, taste, and _____.
3. _____ Air is _____ in spring than in winter.
4. Birds that do this move south for the winter and come back during the spring.
5. The season that comes between winter and summer is _____.
6. Frogs and salamanders are _____-blooded animals.

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