

An artistic illustration of a spring garden scene. In the foreground, there are green plants with small pink flowers. A large yellow butterfly is perched on a leaf, and a blue butterfly is flying nearby. The background shows a soft-focus forest with tall, thin trees. The text 'SPRING WATCH for children' is centered in a white, cloud-like shape.

SPRING WATCH

for children

Together towards spring!

Lets marvel together at spring waking up after winter. Listen, watch, explore and smell – that's spring arriving! You might feel the spring breeze on your skin, or notice the yellow flowers of Coltsfoot, or maybe already hear a bird singing. If you take a careful sniff, you can also tell what spring smells like. Fill out this spring card as you see species for the first time this spring or discover other wonders of nature.



1. The sunny yellow flowers of **Coltsfoot** cover the roadsides and field ditches in early spring. It starts to grow leaves only afterwards in summer. The flower of Coltsfoot is actually an inflorescence: it consists of many tiny florets.



How many flowers did you count? _____

2. The white stars of forest shine on the wooded meadows and ditch banks in early springtime. The **Wood anemone** blooms in large flower beds before the tree leaves grow big. It is protected in the provinces of Oulu and Lapland. The Wood anemone is a perennial plant, so you might want to keep in mind where you found it and come back next year!



Do you know a good Wood anemone forest?

3. The **birch** grows green in late spring. Only a thin waxed scale protects the tiny buds from winter frost. It provides food to many animals in winter: hares and moles feed on the bark, the black grouse nibbles its winter buds.



Did you see an animal nearby that might eat birch? What was it? _____

4. Alongside ditches thrives the **Marsh-marigold**, also called Kingcup, with bright yellow flowers and large dark green leaves. Having stored food in the previous summer in the rootlets, it is now ready to get a jump start on spring. Other wetland flowers bloom later in summer. The Marsh-marigold is poisonous, so instead of picking them take a photo or make a drawing in your booklet.



5. You can find **red wood ants** busy in the spring forest. The workers are already building anthills while the ant queen and the males are still resting inside the nest.



6. On a warm spring day you can see a fuzzy **bumblebee** buzzing in willow flowers. Willows bloom early in spring, so they are excellent nutrition for hibernated queens. Bumblebees are outstanding pollinators. They have a hairy thick body, different from wasps and bees.



7. A **ladybug** spends its first summer eating aphids. It is ready to reproduce only next summer. Since aphids are a nuisance to gardens, these ladybugs are very helpful to us humans.



How many dots can you spot on its wings?

The number of spots identify the species of the beetle. If you count seven, you've found the seven-spot ladybird.

8. The first butterflies of spring give us so much joy! The **Brimstone** is among the earliest ones. It overwinters as an adult in a sheltered place. The Brimstone keeps its wings shut as it stops on a flower. The lemon yellow colour makes it easily recognizable.

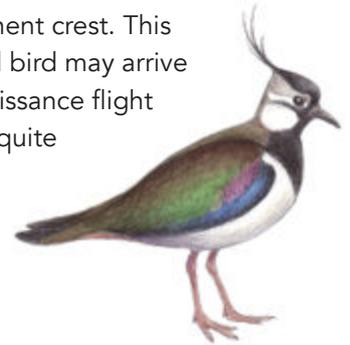


9. The **frog** hibernates in the muddy bottoms of ponds and ditches. When the ice melts the common frogs head off to mate. They return to lay their frog spawn in the same places year after year.

On April and May evenings, listen to the sound of frogs near the wetlands and ponds. Did you hear the frogs croaking? Did you see the frogs spawn?



10. The **Lapwing** has a prominent crest. This black and white pigeon-sized bird may arrive in Finland for its first reconnaissance flight in early spring. If spring isn't quite ready yet, it might turn on its heels and come back only after snow-free spots have appeared in the fields and beaches.



11. The **Wagtail** has spent winter in the Mediterranean. It migrates here when the insects that have woken up from hibernation are on the fly. You can see a wagtail walking near the beach or in an open spot – and it means summer is almost here!



12. The **Swallow** marks the return of summer. Insect-eating swallows return from the warmth of Africa on the eve of summer.



Spring card

Year: _____

My spring watch

Write on each species the date and place you saw it for the first time.

My spring excursions

Take a spring trip to observe the progress of spring. Tick the list below for the species you have detected on your excursions.

1. excursion **2. excursion** **3. excursion**

date: date: date:

place: place: place:

1. Coltsfoot blooms

2. Wood anemone blooms

3. Birch shows baby leaves

4. Marsh-marigold blooms

5. Ant seen

6. Bumblebee in willow flowers

7. Ladybug on the move

8. Brimstone awakened

9. Frog spawn in the water

10. Lapwing has arrived

11. Wagtail is here again

12. Swallow has returned



Take a spring trip! You can go on a spring trip by yourself, with a friend, with your nature or detective club or with your class. A spring trip can be a quick excursion around your backyard, a longer picnic trip to a nearby forest or to the beach. Take this spring card and a pen with you. Binoculars, loupes and field guides might come in handy!

Spring card filling instructions

The first column on the spring cards is reserved for first sightings. Mark the date and the place of your first sightings in the box. (First sighting means the time you see a specie for the first time in springtime.)

There is room for three different spring excursions on the spring card. Mark the species you saw on each excursion in the columns under the right trip.

Nature Leagues action for children

Nature League (Luonto-Liitto) is a nature and environmental protection organization for children and the youth. We provide nature clubs, camps and excursions for children and environmental education material and courses for adults who work with children and the youth.

Other spring sightings I made

What I saw:

Where:

When:

