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Animals in Spring: The Great Wake-Up Call

When the snow melts and the sun stays out longer, the animal kingdom gets a very important "wake-up call." Spring is the busiest season of the year for wildlife. After a long, cold winter, animals have three main goals: find food, return home, and start their families.

Waking Up from Winter

Some animals spend the entire winter in a deep, heavy sleep called hibernation. During this time, their heartbeats slow down and they don't eat at all. In the spring, the warming air and the sound of melting ice tell their bodies it is finally time to get up.

- **Bears:** Mother bears and their cubs crawl out of their dens. They are very hungry and spend their days looking for early berries, roots, and fish.
- **Groundhogs:** These famous "weather forecasters" peek out of their underground burrows. They are looking for the first patches of fresh green clover and grass to munch on.
- **Bees:** Queen bees wake up from their winter hiding spots in the soil or under bark. They immediately begin looking for the very first spring flowers to find nectar.



The Long Journey Home

Not all animals stay put during the winter. Many travel hundreds or even thousands of miles to find warmer weather and more food. This seasonal movement is called migration.

- **Birds:** Songbirds, like robins and bluebirds, fly back north from the warm south. You can hear them singing loudly early in the morning. They aren't just being noisy; they are "claiming" the best trees to build their nests in.
- **Monarch Butterflies:** These amazing insects begin a multi-generational journey back from Mexico. They look for milkweed plants to lay their eggs on so their caterpillars have plenty to eat.





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New Life and Growing Families

Spring is often called "baby season" in the forest and the pond. Because there is plenty of fresh food and the weather is mild, it is the perfect time for tiny animals to grow big and strong.

- **In the Pond:** Frogs and toads return to the water to lay thousands of tiny, jelly-like eggs. Soon, these eggs hatch into tadpoles, which look like little fish with long tails. Over the next few weeks, they will grow legs and lose their tails to become frogs!
- **In the Forest:** Deer have babies called fawns. Fawns are born with white spots on their reddish-brown fur. These spots aren't just for looks; they help the fawns blend into the "dappled" sunlight hitting the forest floor so predators can't see them. This is a type of camouflage.
- **In the Nest:** Birds are master builders! They use their beaks to weave together twigs, mud, dried grass, and even animal fur to create a cozy, cup-shaped home for their fragile eggs.

1. Which of these is the best example of an animal using camouflage in the spring?

- A) A bird singing loudly from a high tree branch.
- B) A bear catching fish in a cold river.
- C) A fawn with white spots lying on the forest floor.
- D) A monarch butterfly flying north from Mexico.

2. Based on the text, why do birds sing more often and loudly in the spring?

- A) To help their eggs hatch faster with the sound.
- B) To claim a territory for building their nests.
- C) To warn other animals that a predator is nearby.
- D) Because they are happy the snow has melted.



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3. Why is spring the "perfect time" for many animal babies to be born?

- A) There is plenty of fresh food and the weather is mild.
- B) Predators are all still asleep in hibernation.
- C) The days are shorter, so babies can sleep more.
- D) It is the only time of year that animals can find water.

4. What would happen to a bear that woke up too early while it was still snowing?

- A) It would grow white spots for camouflage.
- B) It would start migration immediately.
- C) It would struggle to find enough food to survive.
- D) It would find plenty of berries to eat.

5. Which material is NOT mentioned as something birds use for nests?

- A) Mud
- B) Animal fur
- C) Twigs
- D) Plastic wrappers

6. How does a tadpole differ from an adult frog?

- A) A tadpole has a tail and lives underwater.
- B) A tadpole lives on land, but a frog lives in water.
- C) A tadpole is born from a live mother, but a frog comes from an egg.
- D) There is no difference; they look exactly the same.

"Dappled Light" Watercolor Art

Goal: Understand camouflage and light.

The Background: Using watercolors, have students paint a forest floor using greens, browns, and yellows.

The Technique: Use a dry sponge or a crumpled paper towel to "dab" white or light yellow paint over the top to create dappled sunlight.

The Addition: Have them draw and cut out a small fawn and hide it in their painting.

Connection: This reinforces the "Animals in Spring" section about how fawns use spots to blend into the light.