Beginner’s Field Guide
Spring in Chicagoland

It’s spring!
Birds are migrating north, spring wildflowers are emerging, and trees are leafing out. The outdoors is abuzz with new life and change from week to week, and the sun is setting later and later.

This field guide will help you get to know the plants and animals that also call your Chicagoland neighborhood home. These are just a few of the many birds, mammals, insects, trees, spiders and more that live in backyards, under logs, in gardens, and in nearby parks or forest preserves. Learn their common names in both English and Spanish, and their scientific names too!

Grey Squirrel
Ardilla Gris
Sciurus carolinensis
Find them coming out of their shelters as the days warm, playing in the sun, and finding food they hid last fall.

Robin
Mirlo Primavera
Turdus migratorius
Some stay all winter but many robins that have migrated south for food are returning – and may return year after year to the same yard or tree.

Red-Winged Blackbird
Sargento Alirrojo
Agelaius phoeniceus
The bright red of the male’s shoulder is hard to mistake, and so too is their conk-la-ree song.

Tadpole
Renacuajo
Order Anura
Explore local ponds or wetlands and you may see a tadpole of one of Chicago’s thirteen frog or toad species.

Mourning Cloak
Capas de Luto
Nymphalis antiopa
Butterflies need to be warm to fly – the mourning cloak’s dark color helps it absorb sunlight.

Red Admiral
Vanessa o Almirante rojo
Vanessa atalanta
They can often be seen landing on a sunny white fence to warm up.

Hunting Spider
Araña lobo
Schizocosa or Dolomedes
These spiders don’t make webs, except for homes for their babies. They are on the prowl looking for food with their eight eyes but are non-aggressive with people.

Bright Green Sweat Bee
Abeja de sudor verde brillante
Augochlora
Overwintering in old rotting logs, they are ready to emerge in spring to feed on and pollinate our spring wildflowers.

Inchworm
Oruga
Geometridae
These cute moth larva have fewer extra legs than most caterpillars, so they walk in a loopy way.
Go, explore!
Keep your eyes open for wildlife on your walk to school or in your parkway. See for yourself what critters are out there. Ask a trusted adult to take you to a park or nature center.

Draw your own observations of nature and what's around you! Don't forget to record Date, Location, Time, and Weather!