

# NATURE I SPY

Go outside and really look around. There are living things everywhere! It's easy to think about nature in wild places—like herds of elk in the Rocky Mountains, alligators in Florida or elephants roaming the African savannah. But even in our own backyards, on sidewalks and in the park, there are lots of amazing living things.



## MATERIALS

- ☐ Nature Bingo card  
(available at [msichicago.org/summerbrain](https://msichicago.org/summerbrain))
- ☐ Notebook
- ☐ Pencil or pen

## INSTRUCTIONS

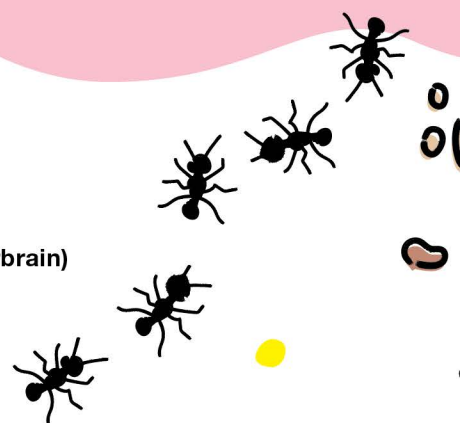
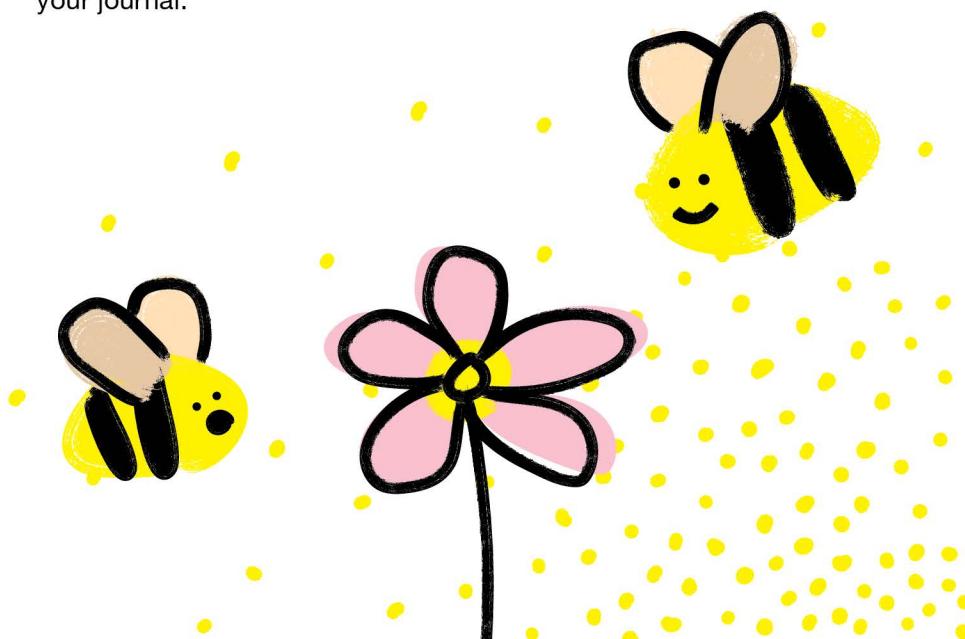
Find a notebook to use as a nature journal. You can even make your own by cutting pieces of paper to the size you want and stapling them together. Go for a walk and give yourself a nature observation challenge using the questions below. Or, make a game of it by using our Nature Bingo card.

### HOW MANY KINDS OF TREES CAN YOU FIND?

You may not know the name of a tree, but you can find differences by observation. What is the shape of its leaves? What does the bark look like? What is the overall shape of the tree? Write a description and draw pictures. How many trees are in your park or on your block?

### WHAT INSECTS DO YOU SEE, AND WHAT ARE THEY DOING?

The best way to find out what busy insects are doing is to observe. Ants and bees are easy to watch because you can find them everywhere. Look for bees in a patch of flowers. As long as you are cautious and keep your distance, bees shouldn't bother you. Find one bee and follow it. Where does it go? How long does it spend in each flower? Do you see yellow powder or pollen on its back? Are there other bees around? Look for ant colonies or other insects. Watch what they do and count how many you see. Record your observations in your journal.





### WAS THAT THERE YESTERDAY?

One of the amazing things about the natural world is it changes every day. Plants and flowers grow, birds make nests, and spiders and mosquitos seem to appear out of nowhere. Try to observe these changes as they happen. Pick something outside that interests you, like a patch of flowers, a tree that attracts a lot of birds, or an animal that hangs out in the same spot. Visit the same place every day and see if there is something new or changing. Write it in your journal and, over time, you may see a pattern of behavior or the life cycle.

### WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Scientists who study the natural world are called biologists. There are different types of biology—botanists study plants, zoologists study animals, and ecologists study how different populations interact—but all of them rely on observation. There are many formal ways to record and analyze animal behavior including ethograms where every action and behavior an animal does is recorded for a set period of time. For now, the most important thing is to pay attention and investigate something that interests you.

Famous scientists like E.O. Wilson and Charles Darwin relied heavily on nature walks and journals to not only track their progress, but to review and think philosophically about the intertwined nature of all things. This type of observation and recording of thoughts have helped to bring about some of our most important scientific discoveries.

### TIPS

Make sure you are with a parent or caregiver if you are exploring away from your home. Pay attention to your surroundings so that you stay safe.

### LEARN MORE

Find educational resources at the North Park Village Nature Center in Chicago ([chicagoparkdistrict.com](http://chicagoparkdistrict.com)) or Cook County Forest Preserve nature centers located throughout the region ([fpdcc.com/nature-centers](http://fpdcc.com/nature-centers)).

### RECOMMENDED READING

*Outdoor Science Lab for Kids: 52 Family-Friendly Experiments for the Yard, Garden, Playground, and Park*, by Liz Lee Heinecke

*Hidden City: Poems of Urban Wildlife*, by Sarah Grace Tuttle





# NATURE BINGO

Observe the world around you by playing nature bingo!

