



MARCH/APRIL 2025

Xplor



CROONING CROAKERS

LOVESICK FROGS RING IN SPRING

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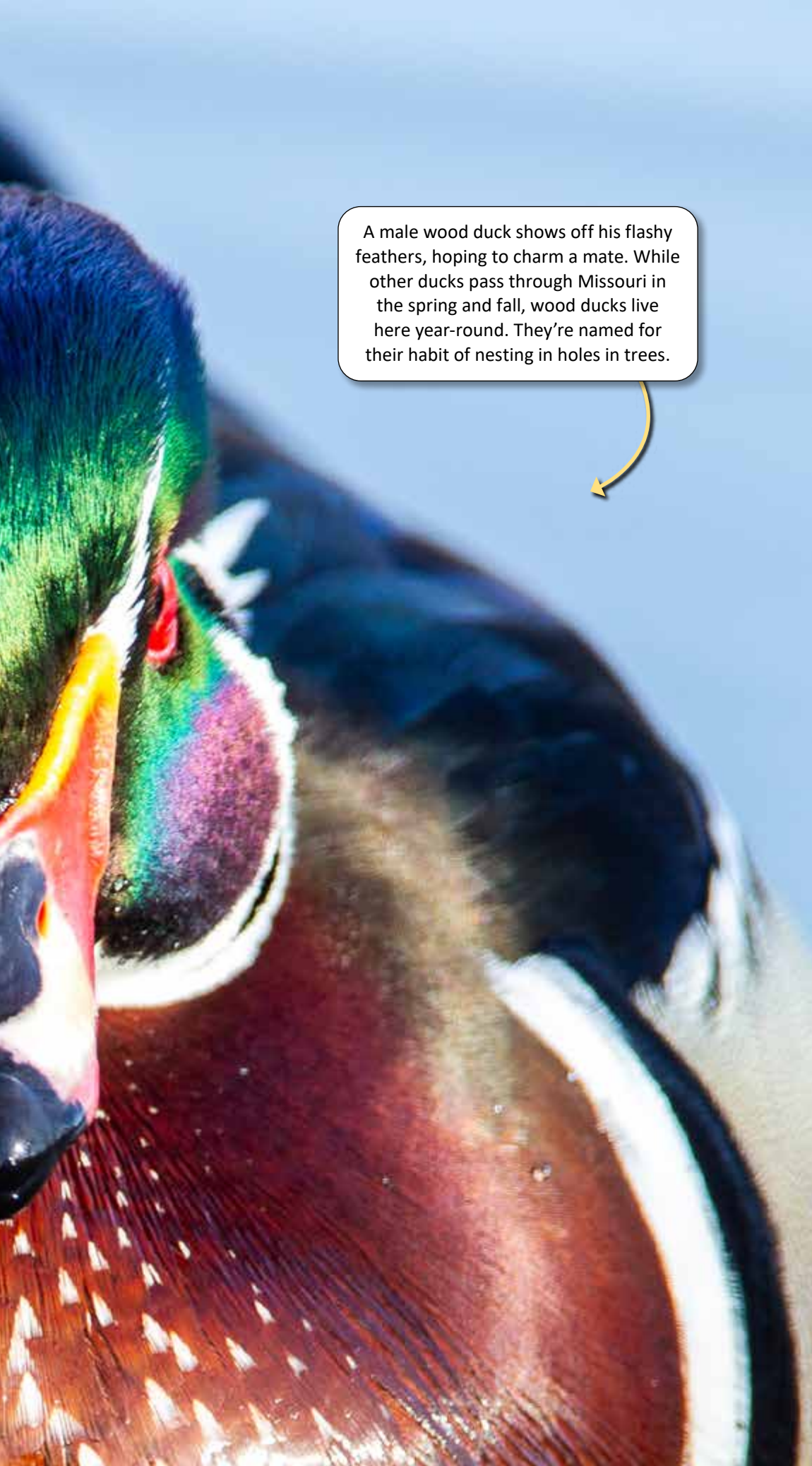
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A male wood duck shows off his flashy feathers, hoping to charm a mate. While other ducks pass through Missouri in the spring and fall, wood ducks live here year-round. They're named for their habit of nesting in holes in trees.



Xplor

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ON THE COVER
American Bullfrog

STRANGE BUT TRUE

Your guide to all the
**UNUSUAL, UNIQUE,
AND UNBELIEVABLE**
stuff that goes on in nature

To get a girlfriend, **EASTERN NEWTS** wiggle their tails and shuffle around underwater. During this courtship “dance,” males release perfumes into the water, which female newts find irresistible.



SNAKES don't have external ears, but that doesn't mean they can't hear. A snake's jawbone connects to organs inside its head that are similar to our inner ears. When the jawbone feels vibrations, the snake's inner ears hear a slightly muffled sound.



PEREGRINE FALCONS

usually nest on cliff ledges. But thanks to a surplus of pigeons — one of the falcon's favorite foods — peregrines also nest atop skyscrapers and utility towers in cities like St. Louis and KC.



DIVING BEETLES spend a lot of time underwater hunting for small fish, tadpoles, and aquatic insects to eat. To stay under longer, the air-breathing insects trap a bubble of air under their wings and use it to breathe while submerged.



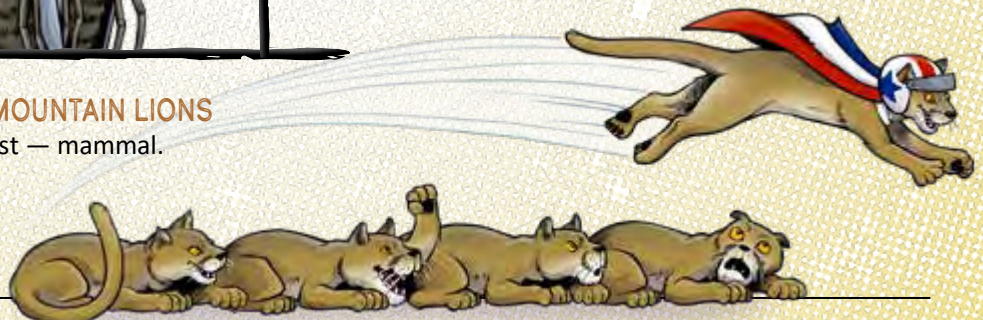
The buzz on **MOSQUITOES** is that they're nothing but bitey and bad. But that's not entirely true. Mosquitoes transport pollen between flowers, helping plants make seeds. They're also food for birds, bats, and other animals.



A **BAT'S** wings are made up of the same bones as those found in your hands. On a bat, a thin but tough scrap of skin stretches between the bones. To fly, bats wave their hands as if they're saying “howdy!” over and over again.



When judging Missouri's longest leapers, **MOUNTAIN LIONS** win the prize for bounciest — and pounciest — mammal. These rare visitors to the Show-Me State use powerful leg muscles to jump 20 feet straight up or 40 feet forward!



WHAT IS IT?

DON'T KNOW? Jump to Page 21 to find out.

- 1 In the water, I'm a peaceful chap.
- 2 Cornered on land, I might snap.
- 3 My jaws spring shut like a steel trap.
- 4 And my shell protects me like a batter's cap.



TWO TRUTHS, ONE LIE

Which fascinating fact is actually a fib?

Answer on Page 21



- 1 Green herons are one of the only birds to use bait. They drop insects, feathers, and other objects in the water to lure fish into striking range.
- 2 From above, a green heron's back blends in with leafy aquatic plants. From a fish's perspective, the heron's brown-streaked belly looks like cattails.
- 3 Compared to other herons, green herons have a tiny body. But their extra-long legs, which can reach up to 2 feet, help them wade into water like bigger-bodied birds.

HOW TO

PRACTICE FOR TURKEY SEASON

2 FIND A SAFE PLACE TO SHOOT

To find a nearby Conservation Department shooting range, visit short.mdc.mo.gov/Z9W. If you'd rather practice on your own land, pay attention to what's behind the target. Shotgun pellets can travel nearly 300 yards, and they don't stop once they hit a paper target.

To better your odds of bagging a gobbler, practice shooting at paper targets before squeezing the trigger on the real thing.

1 GRAB A GROWN-UP

You should never, ever handle a shotgun without a grown-up's permission and guidance. Turkey hunting requires the right equipment. Ask an experienced hunter to help you set up a shotgun, choose the right shells, and show you how to handle the gun safely.

3 GET SOME TARGETS

Download a **turkey target** from short.mdc.mo.gov/ZqS. If you don't want to print targets, simply use a black marker to draw a 1-inch-wide dot on several sheets of typing paper.



4 STEP OFF

Hang the target so the head (or dot) is about 3 feet off the ground — about the same height as a real-life gobbler. Practice shooting from 40, 30, and 20 yards away. (A grown-up's step is about a yard.) Forty yards is the longest shot you should attempt on a turkey, but it's important to also practice shooting at close range. Shotguns used for turkeys fire a baseball-sized cloud of pellets for the first 20 yards. The cloud gets bigger the farther it goes. This means you have to aim *better* when the target is *closer*.



5 TAKE YOUR SHOT

Sit in the same position you would in the turkey woods: on the ground, feet flat, knees bent, arms resting on your knees to steady the shotgun. You can also rest the gun on **a tripod** or monopod. Put the butt of the gun firmly in the crook of your shoulder, rest your cheek tightly against the stock, look down the center of the barrel, and put the bead on the target's black dot.

6 CHECK YOUR SHOT

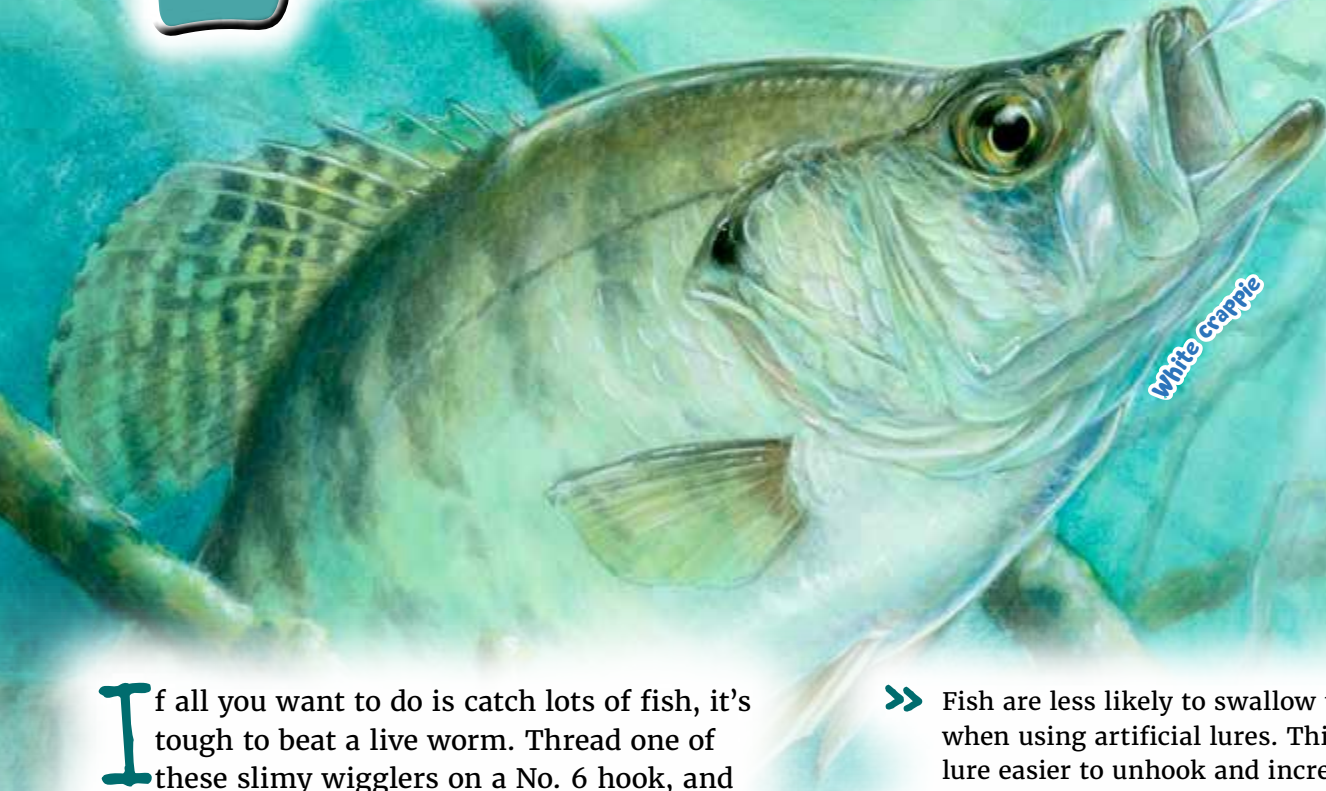
After each shot, look at the target to see where the pellets hit. Did they land above the black dot? Aim lower next time. Did they land too far to the right? Aim a little to the left next time. Keep practicing at each distance until most of the pellets are grouped around the black dot. Only then will you be ready for a real turkey.



The 2025 youth spring turkey season — for hunters who are 6 to 15 years old — is April 12–13. The regular spring season runs from April 21 through May 11. For details on turkey hunting permits and rules, visit mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping.

The Lure of LURES

Hungry fish can't resist these tried-and-true lures.



White Crappie

If all you want to do is catch lots of fish, it's tough to beat a live worm. Thread one of these slimy wigglers on a No. 6 hook, and you'll catch nearly anything with fins, from button-lipped bluegill to bucket-mouthed bass. In fact, hungry fish are more likely to snarf down a worm, minnow, or other live bait than nearly any lure made of plastic, metal, or feathers.

So what's the lure of using artificial lures?

- » Using lures is easier. You don't have to stop at the bait shop or dig up a bunch of worms. Just open your tackle box, pick a lure, and tie it on.
- » Lures aren't messy. If hooking a smelly minnow, twitchy grasshopper, or slimy worm grosses you out, give lures a try.
- » Fish are less likely to swallow the hook when using artificial lures. This makes a lure easier to unhook and increases the fish's survival odds when you release it.
- » Lures offer more action. You cast out a lure and reel it in over and over again. This gives you more to do than simply watching a bobber.
- » Some lures dive deep. Others splash across the surface. Some are even made to slip through vegetation without getting snagged. In other words, lures can cover more water — and find more fish — than bait.
- » Lures come in a variety of shapes and sizes. You can tailor which one you use to the kind of fish you hope to catch.

Variety is a Vice of Life

As you can see, there's lots to love about lures. Unfortunately, there are also lots of lures to love. Walk into any tackle shop and you'll find hundreds of fish-catching contraptions in nearly every shape, color, and size. If you're new to fishing, it can feel overwhelming trying to choose the right one. Fear not! We've picked five sure-fire lures, and we'll give you the rundown on how to use each one.



Jigs have a metal head on one end and a sharp hook on the other. Some jigs, like marabou jigs, wear a skirt of feathers around the hook. Other jigs hide the hook inside a rubbery tube that makes the lure look like an insect grub or a mini octopus with tiny tentacles.

Which Fish?

Jigs are often used to catch panfish like **bluegill** and **crappie**, but **bass**, **trout**, and **walleye** will also gobble them up. Use small jigs for fish with small mouths (like bluegill) and larger jigs for fish with bigger mouths (like bass).

Try This

Despite their funny name, crappie (*crop-ee*) taste yummy. From late March to early May, crappie hang out in shallow water along the edges of lakes. Tie a 1/16-ounce marabou jig to the end of your line. If the water is murky, use a brightly colored jig. If the water is clear, use one that isn't so bright. Cast the jig out from shore, let it sink for a bit, then reel it in slowly, letting it bounce over rocks and logs. When you feel a nibble, don't set the hook too hard. Crappie are nicknamed "paper mouths" for a reason. Just lift the tip of the rod slightly and get ready for a splashy fight.

Who's Biting?





SOFT PLASTIC LURES

These rubbery lures can look like nearly any aquatic critter, from lizards to minnows to worms. When reeled through the water, they shimmy and shake like they're alive, which drives fish wild.

Which Fish?

Soft plastic lures are usually used to catch largemouth and smallmouth bass, but other fish will take them, too.

Try This

Largemouth bass often lurk under shady lily pads and other vegetation. Pulling a lure through thick cover is sure to get you snagged, unless you try this trick. Push the point of an offset hook into the nose of a plastic worm. Let the point come out about 1/4 of an inch from where you pushed it in. Pull the hook, except for the eye, out of the exit hole. Twist the hook around, then bury the point in the body of the worm. The worm should be straight, not bent into a hump. Slip a bullet sinker onto your line, and tie the line to the eye of the hook. Since the hook is stuck in the worm, it's less likely to snag on stems and rocks — although it can still happen!



SPINNERS

Spinners — also called roostertails — have a treble hook on one end and a shiny metal spoon on the other. When pulled through the water, the spoon spins like a boat propeller. This causes it to sparkle as it catches the sun, which makes it look like the shimmering scales on a tasty minnow. The propeller also churns up the water, causing hungry fish to mistake the vibrations for wounded prey.

Which Fish?

Small spinners will catch bluegill, crappie, and other panfish. Larger spinners will catch trout, bass, and other predatory fish.

Try This

Trout typically face upstream, resting in eddies behind rocks or logs, waiting for food to pass by their pie-holes. Tie on a 1/8-ounce spinner and cast it diagonally, upstream and across the river. As the lure gets swept downstream, reel it in just fast enough that the propeller spins. (You may need to practice with short casts where you can watch the lure to learn how fast you need to reel.) When the lure crosses through quieter water behind a rock or log, get ready!



CRANKBAITS

Crankbaits are made of hard plastic formed into the shape of a minnow, frog, or crayfish. Some crankbaits have a lip on their front end that makes them wobble like a swimming fish.

Which Fish?

Nearly any fish will gulp down a crankbait, but they're often used for largemouth and smallmouth bass.

Try This

If you're floating an Ozark stream, tie on a crankbait shaped like a crayfish. Cast the crawdad near cover — like boulders and fallen trees — where a hungry smallmouth might be hiding. Mix things up when you reel in the lure. Reel slowly for one cast, and then let it rip on the next. Jerk the tip of your rod up and down or from side to side as you crank. This will imitate the darting motion of a swimming crayfish.



TOPWATER LURES

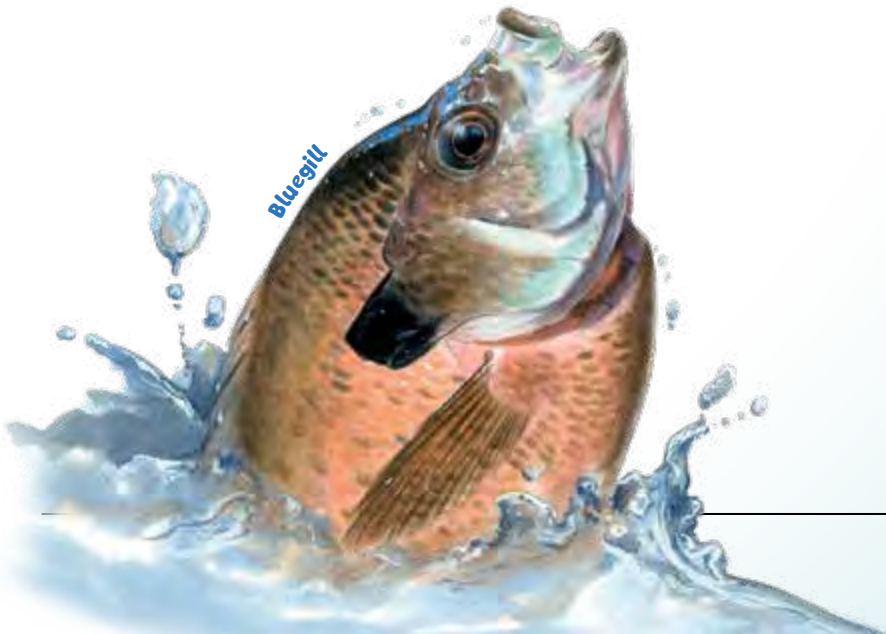
Topwater (aka surface) lures, like their name implies, float on the surface of the water. They're often torpedo-shaped and look like a minnow or frog. Some are filled with pellets so they make a lot of noise when they're reeled in.

Which Fish?

Largemouth bass find it hard to resist topwater lures. Small popping plugs work well for bluegill and other panfish.

Try This

In the summer, largemouth bass rest during the heat of the day and feed more actively after sunset. On a bright, moonlit night, tie on a large topwater lure and cast it way out into the center of a lake or pond. As you reel it in, jerk your rod tip to twitch the lure across the water's surface. Make it make as much noise as possible. In no time, the water will erupt in a frenzy of shark-like splashing as a hungry largemouth lunges up to engulf your lure. After all that excitement, don't forget to set the hook!



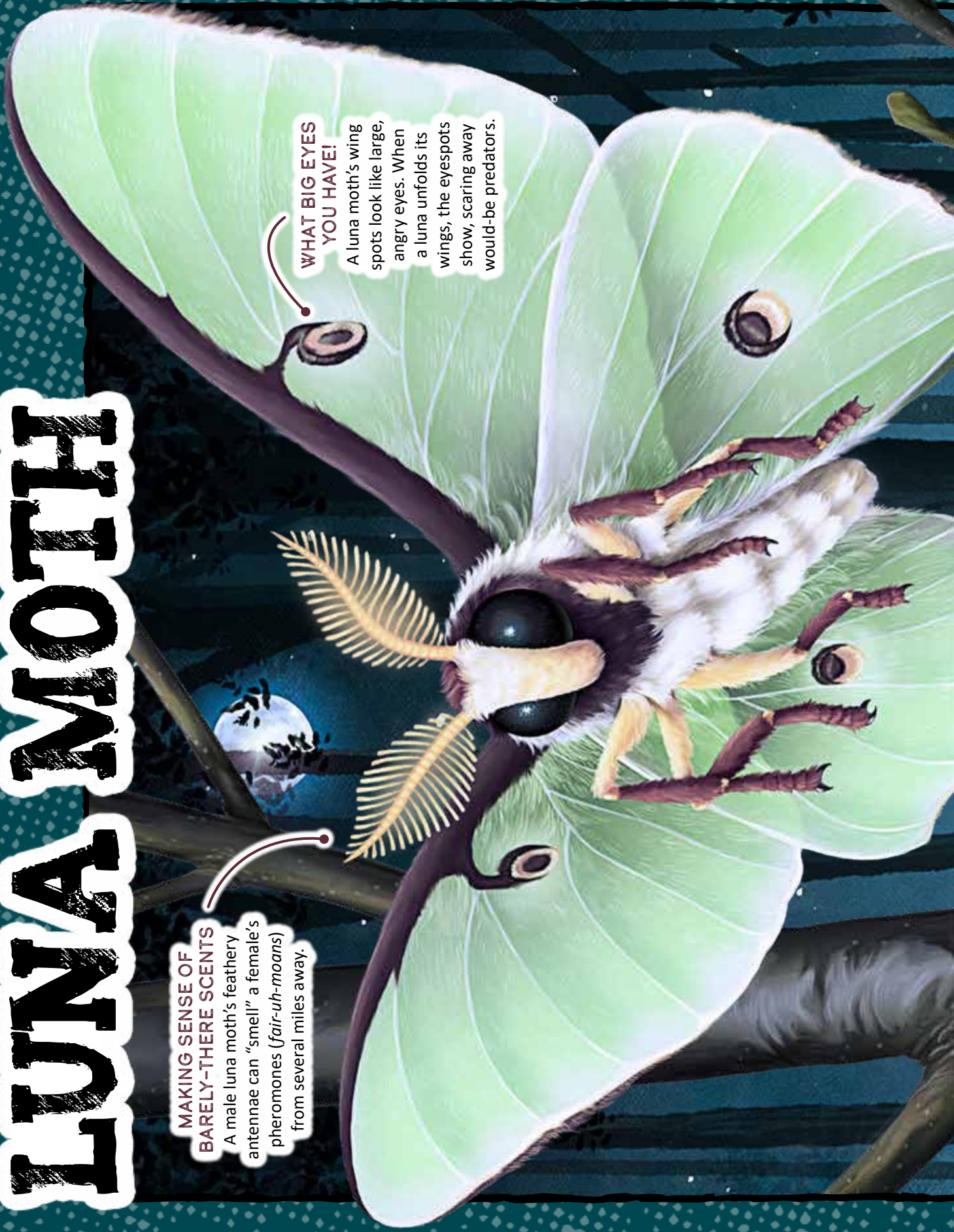
LUNA MOTH

MAKING SENSE OF BARELY-THERE SCENTS

A male luna moth's feathery antennae can "smell" a female's pheromones (*fair-uh-moans*) from several miles away.

WHAT BIG EYES YOU HAVE!

A luna moth's wing spots look like large, angry eyes. When a luna unfolds its wings, the eyespots show, scaring away would-be predators.



An illustration of a Luna moth caterpillar and its adult form. The caterpillar is bright green with yellow and red spots and is crawling on a tree branch. The adult moth is also bright green with a dark brown border on its wings and two prominent tails on each wing. It is perched on a tree branch. The background is a dark forest scene with green foliage.

BAT-BAFFLING TAILS

A luna's dangly tails confuse hungry bats, knocking their attacks off target. A bat may chomp off a mouthful of moth tail — *ouch!* — but the luna survives.

CHUBBY GREEN EATING MACHINE

A luna caterpillar eats hickory, walnut, and persimmon leaves nearly nonstop for two months. When it turns into an adult, it can't eat and lives for only a week.

LOVE IS IN THE AIR

To attract a boyfriend, female moths release pheromones. These airborne chemicals are like perfumes that male moths can't resist.

SPRING CONCERT

Nature puts on a concert every spring, and you don't need tickets to attend. Just head outside at sunset and explore marshes, ponds, wet fields, and flooded ditches. As the sun sinks, the show kicks into full swing when each puddle and pool overflows with a chorus of singing frogs and toads.

The tiny frogs with huge voices aren't singing for you. They're lovesick males who are belting out ballads in hopes of charming a girlfriend.

In a crowded pond, several kinds of frogs and toads may sing at the same time. Each species makes a unique call. This helps males and females of the same species find each other. (Sometimes we can't hear the difference, but they can.) Once a female has zeroed in on a few crooning croakers of her own kind, she listens closely to each potential boyfriend's song. The male who calls loudest and most often usually wins her affection.



Spring peeper

Love Songs

Male frogs and toads sing without moving their lips. How? Before singing, a male shuts his mouth and seals the holes in his nose. Then he pushes air out of his lungs. The air flows over his vocal cords, making his unique call. The air also inflates a stretchy pouch on his throat. The pouch, like the hollow body of a guitar or the bell of a horn, makes the call louder. Some kinds of frogs — like spring peepers — have a single pouch that inflates like a big balloon. Others — like northern crawfish frogs — have paired pouches that swell up like a trumpet player's cheeks.



SPRING PEEPER



These tiny frogs — they're only an inch long — come in a variety of colors, from pink to tan to gray. One trait they all share is an X-shaped mark on their backs. On light-colored peepers, the X can be hard to see.

VENUE Spring peepers live in woods and forests near ponds, marshes, and swamps. They're found throughout Missouri except for the far northwest corner.

SHOWTIME Spring peepers are one of the first frogs to sing in spring. They begin calling in late February and continue until mid-May.

SET LIST A chorus of spring peepers sounds like jingle bells ringing. Listen for a cheerful, high-pitched *peeeeeep* repeated once each second.



The Circle of Life

Mama frogs and toads lay their jellylike eggs in woodland puddles, flooded fields, marshes, and fish-free ponds. Some species can lay over 20,000 eggs at a time!

In a few days or a few weeks — depending on what kind of frog or toad it is — the eggs hatch, and squiggly tadpoles begin swimming around. Tadpoles have a long, fishlike tail and breathe water.

Some tadpoles live in the water for just a few weeks. Others live there for over a year. Most tadpoles eat tiny aquatic plants.

Eventually, tadpoles lose their tails and sprout arms and legs. They can now hop onto land, breathe air, and look for mates.



BOREAL CHORUS FROG

Chorus frogs can be told from other itty-bitty amphibians by a pair of dark stripes that run from the snout, across each eye, and down each side of the body.

VENUE Boreal chorus frogs are common on prairies, wet pastures, marshes, river edges, and backyard puddles. They're common throughout Missouri, except in the southeastern corner where they're replaced by look-alike Cajun chorus frogs and upland chorus frogs.

SHOWTIME Chorus frogs begin calling nearly as early as spring peepers. The concert starts in late February, peaks in April, and winds down by July.

SET LIST Singing chorus frogs make a noise similar to the sound of running your fingernail over the teeth of a comb: *crrreeeeeep!*

WOOD FROG

These 2-inch-long frogs are perfectly colored to blend in with fallen dead leaves. Like several other frogs, a wood frog's body can freeze nearly solid in winter and thaw out — just in time to sing — in spring.

VENUE Wood frogs are uncommon in Missouri. They live in cool, shady, rocky forests along the eastern edge of the state.

SHOWTIME Wood frogs put on a short show. Listen for them in fish-free, woodland ponds from early February through March.

SET LIST Wood frogs sound like quacking ducks. Listen for a hoarse, quack-like *waaduck!*



PICKEREL FROG

This handsome frog has two large folds of skin running down either side of its back. In between the folds are two parallel rows of squarish dark spots. Although pickerel frogs usually call from the water's surface (like other frogs and toads), they sometimes call while underwater.

VENUE Look for pickerel frogs in springs, cold Ozark streams, and shady woodland ponds. They're common in southern and eastern Missouri and absent in the northwestern third of the state.

SHOWTIME Pickerel frogs begin calling in early March and continue until late May.

SET LIST Some people think a pickerel frog's call sounds like someone passing gas. Let's be more kind and describe it as a low-pitched snore that lasts for a couple seconds.





NORTHERN CRAWFISH FROG

You're more likely to hear this secretive frog than see it. Crawfish frogs spend most of their lives hiding in burrows, usually those made by crayfish.

VENUE Crawfish frogs live only on healthy prairies. Since prairie habitats have disappeared across most of Missouri, these frogs are in danger of disappearing, too.

SHOWTIME To hear these rare but wonderful singers, visit a prairie at dusk from March through mid-May. Males are more likely to sing after a warm, heavy rain has created pools for them to gather in.

SET LIST Getting a girlfriend must make crawfish frogs sleepy. A male's call sounds like a loud, deep snore: *gwwaaaaa*. A bunch of males calling together sounds like pigs grunting at a trough.

AMERICAN TOAD

Contrary to popular belief, you can't get warts from touching a toad. The bumps — they're not warts — on a toad's skin give it a rocklike appearance, helping the chubby amphibians hide in rocky habitats. The bumps also release a mild poison. It isn't strong enough to hurt people, but it can make animals like dogs or cats sick.

VENUE American toads prefer rocky, wooded areas, but they can be found nearly anywhere, including backyards and gardens. They hide during the day under rocks, logs, and in shallow burrows.

SHOWTIME American toads begin calling on warm nights in mid-March. Singing season peaks in May and winds down in July.

SET LIST An American toad's call is a high-pitched, musical trill that sounds a bit like steam whistling out of a tea kettle: *breeeeeeeee!* The call can last up to 30 seconds.



FOWLER'S TOAD

How do chubby toads catch zippy bugs? With a spring-loaded tongue, of course. Toads can flick out their tongues faster than you can blink. Plus, a toad's sticky tongue can stretch nearly 2 inches out of its mouth, which often leaves bugs tongue-tied.

VENUE Fowler's toads are common on sand and gravel bars along Ozark streams. They're also found in fields, backyards, and gardens except in the northwestern corner of the state.

SHOWTIME In southern Missouri, Fowler's toads begin calling in late March. In northern Missouri, they start calling in May.

SET LIST A Fowler's toad sounds a bit like it's crying when it sings. Listen for a nasal *waaaaaaaah* that lasts about three seconds.





SOUTHERN LEOPARD FROG

Leopard frogs have dark spots on their backs like their feline namesake. These 5-inch-long amphibians can jump farther than you think. When startled, they leap into the water and disappear with a splash.

VENUE During mating season, this frog hangs out near ponds, sloughs, and flooded ditches. At other times, it may venture far from water and be found in pastures, meadows, and woods. They're common throughout Missouri except in the far northwest corner.

SHOWTIME Leopard frogs begin singing in early March. The boys in the band really begin belting it out in April, but their calling calms down by July.

SET LIST Imagine if you tickled a duck, and it let loose a series of abrupt, chuckling quacks. That's what a southern leopard frog's call sounds like.

GRAY TREEFROG

Now you see me. Now you don't. Gray treefrogs have a handy trick to hide from hungry hunters. The 2-inch-long frogs can change color — turning from gravel-gray to bark-brown to leafy-green — to match whatever they're crawling on.

VENUE Gray treefrogs live in trees in forests and along streams. They also hang out near houses. Look for them on decks and clinging to windows at night, gobbling up bugs that are attracted to porch lights.

SHOWTIME When evening temperatures reach 60 degrees — usually in May — gray treefrogs start singing. Their concerts start at sundown and continue through the night.

SET LIST Listen for a musical, birdlike trill. A gray treefrog's call sounds a bit like an American toad's but has a slightly lower pitch and a slightly slower tempo.



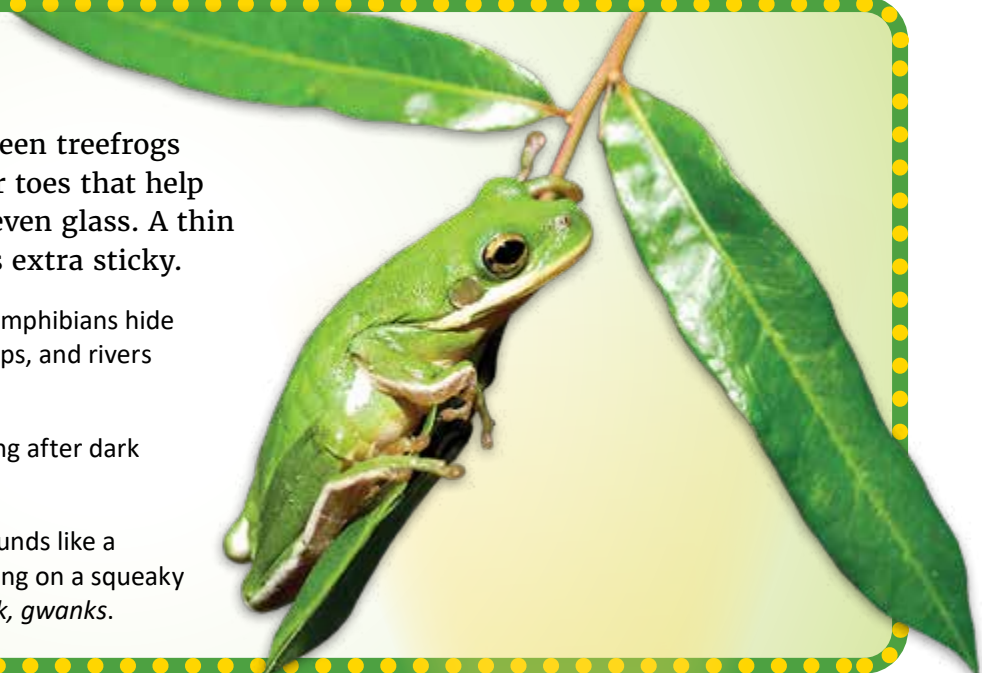
GREEN TREEFROG

Like their grayer-colored cousins, green treefrogs have suction cups on the tips of their toes that help them cling to leaves, branches, and even glass. A thin layer of mucus makes their long toes extra sticky.

VENUE These bright-green, 2-inch-long amphibians hide in vegetation that surrounds marshes, swamps, and rivers in the southeast corner of Missouri.

SHOWTIME Green treefrogs begin singing after dark from mid-April through early August.

SET LIST A chorus of green treefrogs sounds like a distant flock of Canada geese or a dog chewing on a squeaky toy. Listen for a series of nasal *gwank, gwank, gwanks*.





AMERICAN BULLFROG

Missouri's largest frog can reach 8 inches long — from the tip of its snout to the back of its behind — and it has an appetite to match. A hungry bullfrog will eat nearly any critter it can cram inside its cavernous mouth, including insects, crayfish, fish, small snakes, birds, rodents, and even other frogs.

VENUE This common frog is found in marshes, ponds, and streams throughout Missouri.

SHOWTIME Bullfrogs call on warm nights, usually between midnight and sunrise. The nightly concert starts in April, grows loudest in June, and winds down in August.

SET LIST When they're looking for a girlfriend, adult males make calls that sound like deep, rumbling burps. The love burps can be heard over half a mile away.

GREEN FROG

These common frogs look a lot like their larger cousins, American bullfrogs. One way to tell them apart is that a green frog has a fold of skin along both sides of its back.

VENUE Green frogs live in streams (especially in the Ozarks), marshes, swamps, and ponds. They're found throughout Missouri except for the western quarter of the state.

SHOWTIME Green frogs may start calling in late March in southern Missouri. But the real concert kicks off in mid-April, peaks in June, and winds down in July.

SET LIST *Brong!* A male green frog's call sounds like a loose banjo string plucked extra hard.



BLANCHARD'S CRICKET FROG

Cricket frogs belong to the treefrog family, but you aren't likely to find one high in the branches. They don't have sticky toe pads like their tree-climbing cousins. The inch-long amphibians can be told from other itty-bitty frogs by the dark triangle between their eyes.

VENUE Look for cricket frogs along the edges of streams, ponds, and marshes.

SHOWTIME Although mating peaks in June, cricket frogs may start calling in mid-March in southern Missouri. Singing males can be heard day and night throughout the summer.

SET LIST Sometimes, a love song just clicks. To attract a girlfriend, male cricket frogs make a tapping *glick-glick-glick* call that sounds like two pebbles being clicked rapidly together.



To hear live recordings of amphibian love songs, search for frogs and toads at mdc.mo.gov/field-guide.

XPLOR MORE

Hide and Skink

It's amazing how many critters you can find if you just take the time to look. Practice counting the little brown skinks, spring peepers, and carpenter ants in this puzzle, then head outside to see how many real ones you can find in the leaves on the forest floor.

I counted:



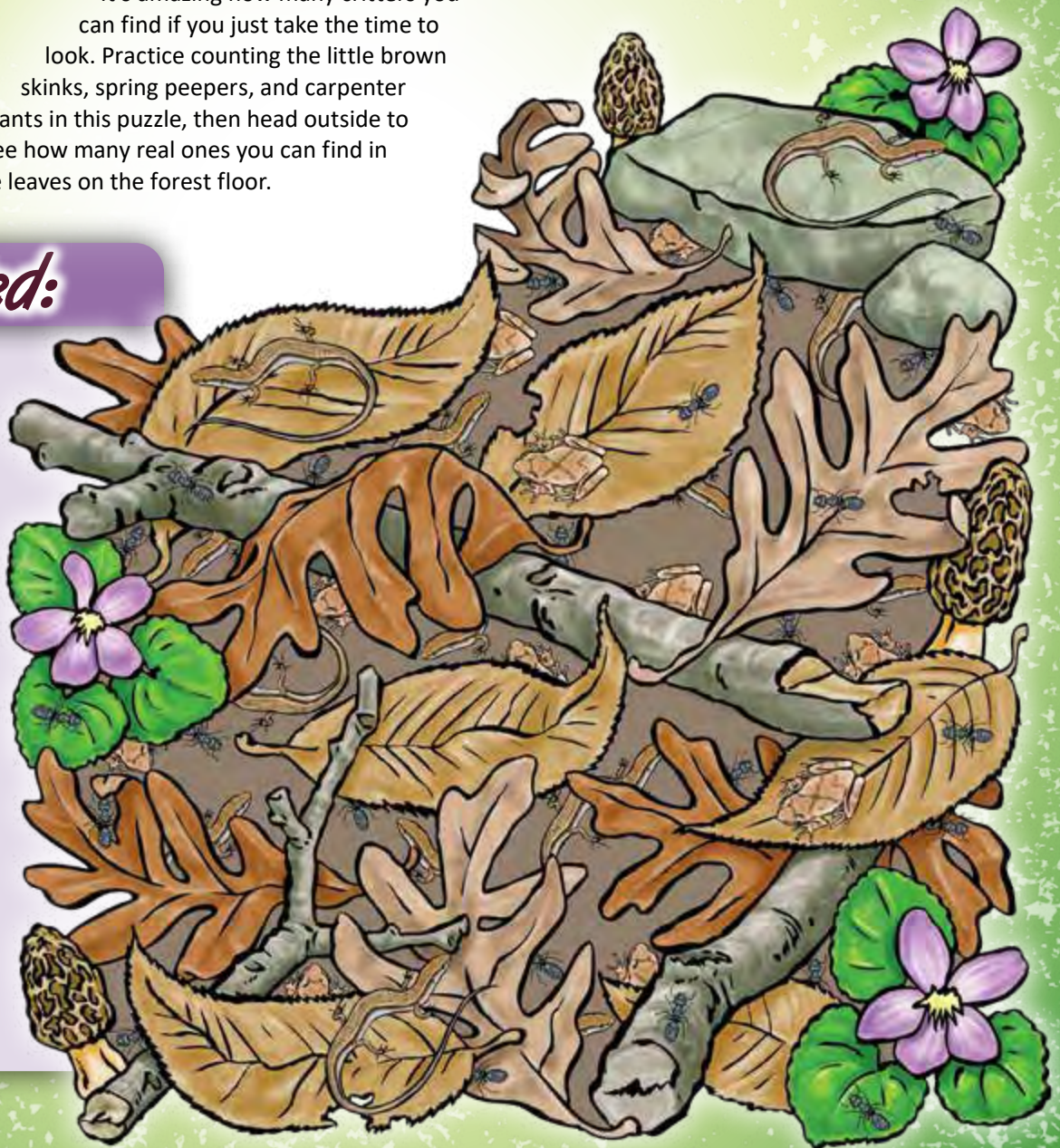
Carpenter ants



Spring peepers



Little brown skinks



Bloomdoggie

According to the dictionary, a “boondoggle” is a useless project or activity — in other words, a waste of time. Some people might think wandering through the woods in search of wildflowers is a boondoggle, but we think it’s the perfect way to spend a sunny spring day. *How many of these woodland flowers can you find?*



Blue phlox



Spring beauty



Columbine



Dutchman's breeches



Common violet



Spiderwort



Wake robin



Trout lily

GET OUT!

FUN THINGS TO DO
AND GREAT PLACES
TO DISCOVER NATURE



PEREGRINE FALCONS

are the fastest birds in the skies, capable of feather-whipping dives approaching 200 miles per hour. For a peek into the home life of these bullet-headed bird bombs, tune in to the live webcam of a peregrine pair nesting near St. Louis at short.mdc.mo.gov/ZZJ.

SOUTHERN FLYING SQUIRRELS

are quite common, but most people have never seen one. That's because they only come out after dark. To better your chances of spotting these furry gliders, place a bird feeder near a porch light. If you hear a soft *whump* or musical squeaks, flip on the light to reveal your hungry visitor.



Wild plum



Serviceberry



Crab apple



Spicebush



Black locust

Ah, spring smells sweet! To find the source of the season's aromatic aromas, **SEARCH FOR BLOOMING TREES AND SHRUBS** like wild plums, serviceberries, crab apples, spicebushes, and black locusts. Just don't sniff a bumblebee up your nose. Bees don't like that!



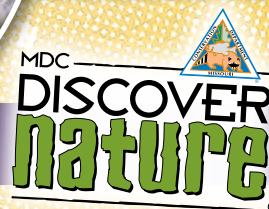
In early spring, search the trunks of maples and other trees for tidy rows of shallow holes. These are the handiwork of **YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKERS**. When sweet sap leaks out, the little woodpeckers return to lick it up.



In March, **MAMA COTTONTAILS BEGIN HAVING BABIES**. You might find a fur-lined nest filled with sleeping bunnies and worry that their mom has abandoned them. Don't despair! Mama rabbits leave their babies tucked away throughout the day and return regularly — usually at dawn and dusk — to feed them.



Looking for more ways to have fun outside? Find out about Discover Nature programs in your area at mdc.mo.gov/events.



WHAT IS IT?

— FROM PAGE 3 —



EASTERN SNAPPING TURTLE

Snapping turtles spend most of their time napping or crawling along the muddy bottoms of shallow ponds, marshes, or rivers. They eat a variety of plants, aquatic animals, and dead things. When they venture onto land and are threatened by predators or people, snappers — as their name suggests — will lunge at attackers and try to bite with their sharp, powerful jaws. In water, snapping turtles hide or escape from disturbances and aren't dangerous to swimmers.

GO FIND IT!



Cut out this critter card and take it with you outside. How many of the things on the card can you find?

ROUGH GREENSNAKE



TREE CLIMBER

Rough greensnakes hang out in low-growing branches, relying on their green scales to hide among the leaves.

MASTERS OF CAMOUFLAGE

These sneaky snakes sometimes take camouflage to the next level by swaying like a vine being blown by the breeze.

BUG BAGGER

Insects and spiders make up most of a rough greensnake's diet. Because their prey is small, they have to catch more of it than other snakes.

TO-TAIL-LY, DUDE!

A greensnake uses its extra-long tail — which can make up nearly half its body — for balance and as an anchor as it slithers among branches.

SWEET-TEMPERED SERPENT

To defend themselves, greensnakes poop and release a foul-smelling liquid when threatened, but they hardly ever bite.

ONE LIE

— FROM PAGE 3 — Lie: 3 (A green heron's legs are only a few inches long, not 2 feet.)

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or update your address, visit
mdc.mo.gov/xplor.

FREE TO MISSOURI HOUSEHOLDS

GO FIND IT!

Rough greensnakes are found in wooded areas near rivers and ponds in the southern two-thirds of Missouri. For more on this colorful serpent, slither to mdc.mo.gov/field-guide.

ROUGH GREENSNAKE

