

It's summer!

Long, sunny days are filled with the sounds of summer...singing insects and birds, the flap of wings, the wind rustling leaves. There's plenty of time to get outside this season, slow down, take notice, and wonder.

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



Eastern Cottontail
Conejo cola de algodón
Sylvilagus floridanus

Distinctive "cotton ball" white tails give these common rabbits their name. Their playful antics make us a smile.



American Goldfinch
Jilguero Americano
Spinus tristis

Brighter in summer than in the winter, they nest later in summer than most species because they feed their young seeds, not insects.



Barn Swallow
Golondrina tijereta
Hirundo rustica

Look for their mud nests or a flash of blue and the long, deeply forked tail as they dart across fields and water to eat insects like mosquitoes.



Chipping Sparrow
Gorrión ceja blanca
Spizella passerina

Listen for the distinctive dry, single pitch trill of their song. Although they are seed eaters in general, they feed insects to their young in the nest.



Monarch Butterfly
Mariposa monarca
Danaus plexippus

These graceful fliers travel all the way from Mexico looking for milkweed--help them out by planting some at home or at school.



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail
Mariposa cometa
Papilio glaucus

Large, striking butterflies that nectar on flowers. Males are yellow, tiger-striped; females are darker.



Cicada
Chicharra
Neotibicen sp.

Those lazy hot evenings of summer are filled with the loud buzzing calls of the cicada. Their larval shells can be found in our gardens.



Garter Snake
Culebra rayada
Thamnophis sirtalis

Harmless to people, our most common snake is identified by its yellow stripes. It preys on mice and other small animals.



Ground Beetle
Escarabajo de tierra
CARABIDAE

There are many species of ground beetles. They are mostly nocturnal and live under rocks, coming out to eat snails, slugs and other insects.



Grass Spiders

Araña tela de embudo
Agelenopsis sp.

These funnel weaver spiders build wide, flat webs - noticeable on dewy mornings - and hide a funnel in the back where the spiders wait to eat prey.



Millipede

Milpiés
Diplopoda

Two pairs of legs on every body segment define these ground dwellers (compared to centipedes with one pair per segment). They are busy breaking down and devouring dead plant material.



Basswood Fruit

Fruto de Tilo
Tilia americana

The unique basswood fruit on their winged stems sometimes add a chocolate perfume underfoot as we walk.



Butterflyweed

Algodoncillo
Asclepias tuberosa

Milkweed plants get a bad rap. 'Weed' is just what we call a plant growing where we don't want it. This gorgeous flower supports monarchs and more.



Clover

Trébol blanco
Trifolium sp.

Commonly found in lawns, this three-leaved flower is a delight for pollinators like bees and butterflies.



White Oak

Roble blanco
Quercus alba

Wide branches and scattered leaves (and acorns!) create beautiful dappled sunlight. These trees can live for several hundred years.



Boreal Chorus Frog

Rana

Pseudacris maculata

Finished calling for the season, they have left the spring ponds and are searching through the grasses for insect snacks.



Rose Milkweed

Venenillo

Asclepias incarnata

Monarchs lay their eggs on milkweed plants and the caterpillars only eat milkweed. Swamp or rose milkweed has rose-pink flowers.



Lightning Bug Beetle

Escarabajo de luciernaga

Photinus pyralis

What's a summer evening without fireflies blinking out their messages? Not flies or bugs, these beetles prefer lawns that are kept natural.

Go, explore!

Keep your eyes open for wildlife on walks in your neighborhood. See for yourself what critters are out there. Visit a local 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!

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We acknowledge that the Field Museum resides within the traditional homelands of many Indigenous nations: Hoocak (Winnebago/Ho'Chunk), Jiwere (Otoe), Nutachi (Missouria), and Baxoje (Iowas), Matchitiwuk (Menominee), Meshkwahkiha (Meskwaki), Asâkiwaki (Sauk), Myaamiaki (Miami), Waayaahtanwaki (Wea), and Peeyanki-hšiaki (Piankashaw), Kiiikaapoi (Kickapoo), Inoka (Illini Confederacy), Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe), Odawak (Odawa), and Bodéwadmik (Potawatomi). We offer respect and gratitude to the diverse Indigenous people that still reside here and across the region, as well as their ancestors.

