



Spring Azure Butterfly (*Celastrina ladon*) - 1.25 inches, clear sky-blue wings; females' wings have black border



Brown Woolly Bear Caterpillar or Larval Form of the Isabella Tiger Moth (*Pyrrharctia isabella*) - brown or coppery red, furry; most have black bands on each end; freezes solid in winter, emerges in spring to pupate



Foam of the Spittle Bug (*Cercopidae family*) - many species; nymphs on host plants cover themselves with a bubbly liquid to protect from predators

Mammals



Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*) - a 16-28-inch, semi-aquatic rodent, brown fur; similar to a beaver but smaller and with a thin round tail instead of the beaver's flat paddle



Eastern Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) - 17 to 20 inches long, silver gray with white chin and underparts, bushy tail; raise young in spring

Other Animals



Eastern Garter Snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis*) - one of the first to awaken from hibernation in March or early April and breed



Eastern Rat Snake (*Pantherophis alleghaniensis*) - black back; white, blotchy belly; can be over 6 feet long; climbs and suns in trees



Turtles - As the days turn warm, turtles bask in the sun, often on logs. Eastern snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina serpentina*), 20-inches long, gray-brown, can weigh 9-35 pounds; found in aquatic vegetation and submerged brush and logs. Eastern painted turtle (*Chrysemys picta picta*) has red marks along bottom of dark carapace (shell) and two yellow spots behind eyes.



Common Five-lined Skink (*Plestiodon fasciatus*) -- 3 to 8 inches, five light stripes on dark skin, bright blue tail when young; as they mature, stripes and blue tail fades. Males have reddish-orange heads during breeding season.



American Bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*) - 8 inches long; green head, olive-brown blotchy back; call is baritone "jug-o-rum"



Freshwater Mussels (*Elliptio complanata*, *Ligumia nasuta*, *Pyganodon cataracta*) - common freshwater mussels, bivalves (two shells), connected by a "hinge"; typically 4-6 inches at maturity; shells often along shoreline left by predators like muskrats, raccoons and birds

Photographs are by Brent Steury, Ed Eder, Glenda Booth, Laura Sebastianelli, Ned Stone, Paula Sullivan; Alonso Abugattas; R. W. Smith, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center; W. D. and Dolfia Bransford, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center; Steven J Baskauf, ©2005, <http://bioimages.vanderbilt.edu/>.

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National Park Service
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Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve
George Washington Memorial Parkway



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Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve What Can I See in the Spring? A Few Examples



Habitat

In the swamp forest, one of several habitats in the preserve, the woods are wet as the ground thaws and woodland plants emerge. Wetland plants start to emerge and the marsh begins to green up.

Plants



Spatterdock or Yellow Pond Lily (*Nuphar luteum*) -- heart-shaped leaves emerge from the mud in early spring; roots resemble alligator hide. In late spring, the golfball-shaped yellow flowers stand just above the water's surface.



Tulip Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) -- a tall (80-100 feet) deciduous tree in the magnolia family. Its flowers, appearing in late spring to early summer, resemble tulips and are light greenish-yellow with an orange band on the outer part of the flower.



Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*) - small, deep red-orange flowers grow in clusters and are showy in late winter or early spring



Pinxterbloom Azalea (*Rhododendron periclymenoides*) - a native azalea, deciduous shrub, typically grows to 3-6 feet. Showy pink blossoms appear around April.



Narrow-leaf Cattail (*Typha angustifolia*) - Some of last season's hotdog-shaped seedheads may remain standing, though many have been beaten down by winter weather. The light green, long, blade-like new leaves emerge and can grow to 2-5 feet tall. Stands provide shelter and nesting cover for red-winged blackbirds, marsh wrens and other birds.



Poison Ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) - hairy vines snake up trees; leaves unfurl. New leaves ("leaves of three, let it be") often start out reddish but turn green as they mature. All parts of the plant can cause a rash in humans.



Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) -- a medium-sized, deciduous shrub, typically grows to 6-12 feet high and 6-12 feet wide; commonly grows in moist areas. Leaves, stems and flowers have a spicy scent. Clusters of tiny, lemon-yellow flowers appear in early spring and are especially noticeable since they come out before the leaves do.



Wild Grape (*Vitis sp.*) - woody vines, can grow to over 30 feet tall; in wooded areas, sometimes attach to a tree when both plants are small and grow up together with the tree. Stems have brown, peeling bark. Clusters of small greenish-white flowers appear in late spring or early summer.



Violet (*Viola sp.*) - one of the most common native spring wildflowers; heart-shaped, deep green leaves; flowers typically blue-purple; some species have white or yellow flowers. Violets are host plants for the caterpillars of several species of butterfly, including the great spangled fritillary (*Speyeria cybele*), the silver-bordered fritillary (*Boloria selene*) and the meadow fritillary (*Boloria bellona*).

Birds



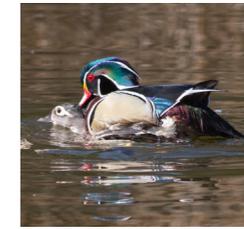
Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) -- 24 inches in length, 63-inch wingspan, a raptor also known as the "fish hawk" because it hovers and plunges feet first to catch fish; ospreys return, build nests and raise their young



Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) -- 31-inches in length, 80-inch wingspan; mature eagles are chocolate brown with white heads and tails; eaglets hatch, adults take fish to nest to feed young



Carolina Wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) - 5 1/2 inches, cinnamon plumage, white eyebrow stripe, long tail flips sideways; loud "teakettle" call



Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) - stunning, colorful patterns; males have chestnut breast, green head with drooping crest; females grayish-brown with white around eye. Ducks form pairs, mate and raise young.



Redwinged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) - around 9 inches in length, males are glossy black with red and yellow shoulder patches; females streaky brown; feed on insects and seeds; loud "O-ka-lee!" call



Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*) - 5 inches long, bright yellow plumage, male has red streaks on underparts; likes wet areas. Many warblers migrate through in the spring and some nest and raise their young.



Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) - 7 inches in length, males have a brilliant royal blue back and head, orangey belly; females gray with orange on sides of neck
Insects



Orange Sulphur Butterfly (*Colias eurytheme*) - 2.5 inches, gold-orange wings, black spot on each forewing