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The Field Museum

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*McHenry County
Conservation District*

*Midewin National
Tallgrass Prairie*

Spring Brook Nature Center

*Spring Valley Nature
Sanctuary*

*US Environmental
Protection Agency*

Spring 2004

Editor's Note

Spring has sprung!

Ben Katzen; Forest Preserve District of Kane County

The natural areas where we conduct our programs go through many changes. Giving students the opportunity to note these changes is an important aspect of the Mighty Acorns program. After doing an initial exploration and survey of the area, then working hard to remove invasive plants, it is now time to evaluate the changes we helped to bring about. We can look for the wildflowers that are an indicator of improving habitat, we can note the increases in sunlight reaching the ground, and we can see what birds and wildlife are attracted to the land. The three seasonal visits allow the students to come full circle in the process of restoration and monitoring. This helps establish a sense of stewardship. Enjoy the spring, and watch the flowers and your students blossom.



What's That?

Amanda Dworak; Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

When Children say "What's that?" do they really want a name? Giving the name of something to a child often ends the conversation and sometimes the observation as well.

In asking "What's that?," children are really asking for more information about what they observe. Posing alternate questions will generally heighten awareness and maintain interest. Involving children in investigations addressing the following questions will be far more instructive and interesting than providing the name of something they observe in nature.

- Is it alive? How do you know?
- What does it feel like?
- What is it doing?
- How does it move? What direction is it going? Does it leave a trail?
- Do you see any eyes, nose, mouth, feet, etc.? If it has one of these things and you can't see it, why not?
- What does it eat? How does it catch its food?
- How does it protect itself?
- Where does it rest?
- Where is its home?
- How might it die?
- Do you think it will look the same when it dies?
- How do you think it was born? Do you think it was a different shape when it was a baby? Like caterpillars, do you think it will change into something else?

