PumpkintownSC.com

UPSTATE EXPLORER SERIES



Spring Mission Pack

10 outdoor missions for curious kids, ages 3 to 12

This pack belongs to _____

- 10 missions with two levels each
- Spring Wildflowers Spot-It sheet
- Explorer log
- Spring bingo card
- Where to try it in the Upstate
- Completion certificate

Before you head out

A quick guide for parents, grandparents, teachers and anyone else tagging along.

How the pack works

Each mission has two versions. **Little Explorers** is for ages 3 to 6 and works great with a grown-up helping. **Trailblazers** is for ages 7 to 12 and asks kids to observe, record and compare.

You do not need to finish them in order or in one day. Most missions work in a backyard, a neighborhood park or a state park.

What to bring

- This pack and a clipboard or hard book
- Crayons and a pencil
- A clear jar for the rain gauge and a ruler
- A light rain jacket
- Water, a snack and a phone timer

Spring safety notes

- **Check for ticks.** Spring is peak tick season. Check everyone, including pets, after every outing.
- **Leaves of three.** Poison ivy is leafing out now and can be shiny and reddish.
- **Leave wildflowers.** Many spring flowers are rare or protected. Photos only, and never taste a plant.
- **Watch hands and feet.** Snakes wake up in spring. Step on logs, not over them, and give any snake space.
- **Stay on the trail.** Fragile flowers and tiny frogs live right beside it.
- **Watch the sky.** Spring storms build fast. Head to the car at the first rumble of thunder.

Make it stick

Let kids lead. Ask "What do you notice?" before giving answers. When a mission is done, have them check the box and mark it on the Explorer Log. Finish 7 or more missions to earn the certificate at the back.

1 Wildflower Detective

☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

Find 3 flowers that are different colors. Draw your favorite.

Trailblazers 7 to 12

Match 3 wildflowers to the Spot-It sheet. Count the petals on each.

Flower 1: name and petal count	
Flower 2: name and petal count	
Flower 3: name and petal count	

Draw what you found

2 Bud Watch

☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

Pick one twig to watch. Draw what it looks like today.

Trailblazers 7 to 12

Visit the same twig 3 times over a few weeks. Draw the bud opening into leaves or flowers.

3 Frog Chorus

☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

At dusk near a pond, close your eyes. Can you hear frogs? Loud or soft?

Trailblazers 7 to 12

Spring peepers sound like tiny sleigh bells. Count the calls you hear in 30 seconds.

Loud, soft or none?	
Calls in 30 seconds	
Did it sound like peeps, trills or croaks?	

Draw what you found

4 Pollinator Patrol

☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

Watch one flower patch. Make a mark for each visitor.

Trailblazers 7 to 12

Watch for 5 minutes. Tally each kind of pollinator that lands.

Bees	
Butterflies	
Flies	
Beetles	
Something else	

Draw what you found

5 Rain Gauge

☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

Put a straight-sided jar outside before it rains. Look after the rain.

Trailblazers 7 to 12

Measure the water with a ruler after each rain for a week. Which day was wettest?

Day 1	
Day 2	
Day 3	
Day 4	
Day 5	

Draw what you found

6 Nest Builders

☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

Watch for a bird carrying a twig, grass or mud in its beak.

Trailblazers 7 to 12

Tally what nest materials you see birds carry. Watch from far away so they keep working.

Never touch a nest or bother baby birds. Parents may be watching nearby.

Twigs	
Grass	
Mud	
Moss or fluff	

Draw what you found

7 Tadpole Watch

☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

Look at the edge of a pond. Can you see tadpoles wiggling?

Trailblazers 7 to 12

Draw a tadpole. Do any have back legs yet? Visit again in 2 weeks to compare.

8 Dawn Chorus Map

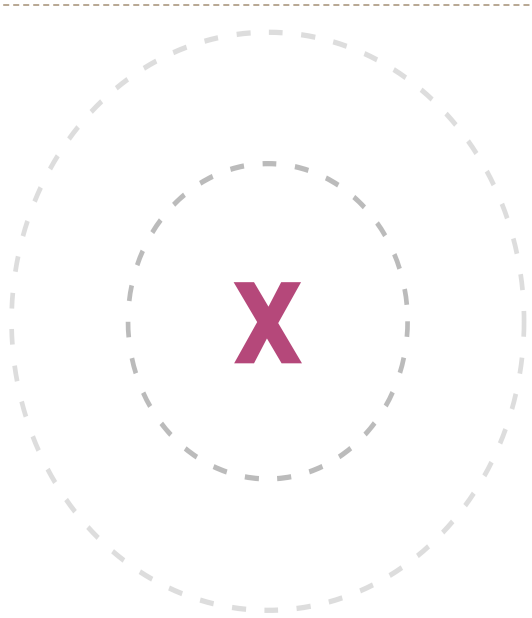
☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

Listen early in the morning. Draw one bird you hear.

Trailblazers 7 to 12

You are the X. Mark each bird song on the map, where it came from.



9 Mill Detective

☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

Find an old mill, dam or stone wall by a river.

Trailblazers 7 to 12

Water once turned wheels to power Upstate mills. Find a mill site and sketch how the water moved.

10 Sprout Scientist

☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

Plant a bean in a cup with a wet paper towel. Draw it every few days.

Trailblazers 7 to 12

Measure your sprout each day for a week. How many inches did it grow?

Day 2	
Day 4	
Day 6	
Total growth	

Draw what you found

Spring Bingo

Cross off each square when you spot it. Get five in a row, then try for a blackout.

Flower bud	Bee	Butterfly	American robin	Bird carrying a twig
Tadpole	Rainbow	Worm	Clover	Dandelion
Violet	Dogwood bloom	Spring Explorer	Frog sound	Caterpillar
New green leaf	Ladybug	Ant hill	Something pink	Yellow pollen
Snail	Unrolling fern	Puddle	Moss	Baby animal

Little Explorers: a grown-up can read the squares aloud. Trailblazers: try to get a blackout in one outing.

Spot-It: Upstate Spring Wildflowers

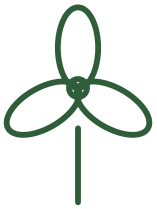
Eight spring flowers you can find in the Upstate. Color each one the color you see.



Oconee bell

Very rare and found almost only in our mountains. Look near Devils Fork in early March. Never pick.

☐ Found it



Trillium

Three petals and three leaves. Look on shady slopes in April.

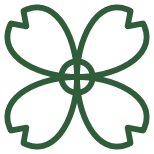
☐ Found it



Bloodroot

One of the first spring flowers. Its root has red-orange sap, so leave it in the ground.

☐ Found it



Flowering dogwood

Four white petal-like bracts, each with a notch at the tip. Blooms in April.

☐ Found it



Violet

Small purple flower with heart-shaped leaves. Often hides in lawns.

☐ Found it



Mayapple

Looks like a little green umbrella. A single flower hides underneath. Do not taste.

☐ Found it



Jack-in-the-pulpit

A striped hood curls over 'Jack' standing inside. Do not taste.

☐ Found it



Mountain laurel

Clusters of cup-shaped pink and white flowers along mountain trails in May.

☐ Found it

Where to try it in the Upstate

Every mission works close to home, but these spots make it easy. Find full family guides with distances, restrooms and parking tips at **pumpkintownsc.com/kids-adventures**.

#	Mission	Try it at
1	**Wildflower Detective**	Station Cove Falls trail; Nine Times Preserve Trillium section; Devils Fork State Park for Oconee bells
2	**Bud Watch**	Your own yard or a neighborhood park you visit often
3	**Frog Chorus**	Conestee Nature Preserve wetlands, Greenville; Lake Placid at Paris Mountain State Park
4	**Pollinator Patrol**	Hatcher Garden and Woodland Preserve or Milliken Arboretum, Spartanburg
5	**Rain Gauge**	Your own backyard or porch
6	**Nest Builders**	Cleveland Park or Unity Park, Greenville
7	**Tadpole Watch**	Conestee Nature Preserve; Lake Placid Trail
8	**Dawn Chorus Map**	Table Rock Lakeside Trail; Nalley Brown Nature Park, Easley
9	**Mill Detective**	Pelham Mill Park, Greer; Glendale Shoals Preserve, Spartanburg; Falls Park on the Reedy
10	**Sprout Scientist**	Your kitchen windowsill

Trail conditions, hours and access can change. Check with the park before you go.

My Explorer Log

Write down where and when you finished each mission.

#	Mission	Where	Date	Done
1	**Wildflower Detective**			☐
2	**Bud Watch**			☐
3	**Frog Chorus**			☐
4	**Pollinator Patrol**			☐
5	**Rain Gauge**			☐
6	**Nest Builders**			☐
7	**Tadpole Watch**			☐
8	**Dawn Chorus Map**			☐
9	**Mill Detective**			☐
10	**Sprout Scientist**			☐

My favorite spring discovery

What I want to find next spring:

PUMPKINTOWN SC · UPSTATE EXPLORER SERIES

Certified Spring Explorer

This certifies that

_____

completed ____ of 10 Spring Missions in the Upstate of South Carolina by looking closely, listening carefully and exploring outside.

_____ _____

Explorer's guide Date

Next adventure: the Summer Mission Pack at pumpkintownsc.com/kids-adventures

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