

**Title of Session:** Nuts About Nature - Spring Has Sprung. . . or has it?

**Moderator:** Bill Hilton Jr.

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**BJ:** welcome to Nuts About Nature, Lynne and Tonya!

**LynneW:** Thank you!

**BJ:** Bill is our discussion leader. We usually start the discussions with introductions

**TonyaRo:** Thanks

**BJ:** I'm a teacher in Pennsylvania and a helpdesk volunteer for Tapped In

**DeborahLS** joined the room.

**BillHi:** What do you teach, BJ?

**BJ:** Welcome, Deborah. We're just doing intros

**LynneW:** I teach educational technology in the College of Ed at Concordia University Portland

**BJ:** I'm an art teacher, Bill

**TonyaRo:** I work with special education students with transition and work experience in upstate NY

**BillHi:** Where specifically, Tonya?

**TonyaRo:** Plattsburgh

**TonyaRo:** WAAAYYY upstate

**DeborahLS:** I'm an instructional technologist for K-5 in Katy, Texas

**SusanR** joined the room.

**BJ:** Hi, Sue. We're just doing introductions

**BillHi:** Sue?

**BJ:** Then I think you can start, please, Bill

**BillHi:** I'm Bill Hilton Jr. of Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History near York, South Carolina. I taught high school and college biology for about 20 years but think of myself as an educator-naturalist.

**SusanR:** Hi Bill. Sue Roseman, K to 8 Occasional Teacher and presenter K to 3+ Great Resources

**BillHi:** Welcome all. This is "Nuts About Nature," a free-wheeling discussion of natural history and how to use it to excite kids about cross-disciplinary learning.

**BillHi:** Who's new to this discussion group?

**DeborahLS:** I am.

**TonyaRo:** I am

**BillHi:** The specific topic for tonight is "Spring Has Sprung--or has it?"

**BillHi:** I'll start out with asking everyone to think for a minute about a definition of the word "spring."

**BillHi:** Don't type anything yet, just think.

**BJ** thinks

**BillHi:** Okay, now you can type your definition.

**TonyaRo:** fresh

**BJ:** rebirth

**DeborahLS:** nature shifts gears from dormancy to growth and birth

**BillHi:** Sue?

**SusanR:** To arise

**BillHi:** Sue is from Canada. They have no seasons there, just permafrost. (Just kidding.)

**DeborahLS:** I'm near Houston. We have hot, hotter, and rainy.

**BillHi:** Okay, those answers sound like all of you have been listening to too much New Age music.

**SusanR:** 6 months of winter here in Ontario

**TonyaRo:** I am in the permafrost zone...most of the time

**BillHi:** How about if I ask you for a scientific definition of spring rather than a poetic one?

**BillHi:** Everybody try again.

**DeborahLS:** March 20th until mid-June. Weather changes -- gets "warmer"

**SusanR:** I am skiing tomorrow...spring skiing

**BJ:** vernal equinox ...days getting longer

**BillHi:** Thanks, Deborah.

**TonyaRo:** I am still sticking with fresh-fresh air

**BillHi:** is that quantifiable, Tonya?

**BillHi:** BJ, is vernal equinox a point in time or a season?

**TonyaRo:** air quality?

**BillHi:** "vernal"

**BJ:** it's a point in time that triggers a season?

**BillHi:** That's better.

**BJ:** . o O ( or marks a season )

**SusanR:** the emerging buds is a sure sign of spring...sap running in the trees

**BillHi:** By definition, spring is the season that begins with the vernal equinox and ends with the summer solstice.

**BillHi:** Whether sap is rising then depends entirely on where you are in the northern hemisphere.

**DeborahLS:** I'll go with Bill's definition.

**BillHi:** Deborah, are there any flowers blooming in Texas where you are?

**DeborahLS:** Not yet. It'll be a few weeks yet. My pool's not warm enough for swimming yet -- 70 degrees, burr. (I'm a "transplanted Texan" from Pennsylvania.

**BillHi:** How 'bout you Tonya, any flowers blooming right now in Upstate New York?

**TonyaRo:** Can't see the ground...not sure about flowers--too white here!

**BillHi:** So maybe you all see my point. Lots of people have lots of different definitions about what spring is.

**DeborahLS:** The greenhouses here in the Houston area have just started "restocking," though for the spring planting.

**BillHi:** For some it might be the arrival of the first robin.

**BillHi:** For others it could be the first dogwood blossom.

**BillHi:** So you're really much safer to go with the true "astronomical" definition as a starting point.

**BillHi:** As someone said, this year spring begins on 20 March, which is the vernal equinox, which is when the tilt of the earth is such that the sun is directly over the equator.

**BillHi:** Now all that may sound complex, but it's BECUASE of the tilt of the Earth and the relative position of the sun that spring can occur.

**BillHi:** When I asked you to define spring, you actually gave me "signs" of spring rather than a definition.

**DeborahLS:** I think most people tend to do that with students, too. Spring is when.....

**BillHi:** Right, Deborah, so perhaps the expected answers would be different for 3rd graders than for high schoolers?

**DeborahLS:** We would hope so, but I'm afraid to ask my 16 yr. old.

**BillHi:** Maybe he/she should be in on this discussion.

**BillHi:** So here's another question. Was the groundhog correct on 2 February this year when he saw his shadow and predicted six more weeks of winter?

**BillHi:** Think about our definition of "spring."

**DeborahLS:** I grew up near there -- there's always six more weeks of winter, because it lasts until the astronomical change -- vernal equinox. Whether it's snowing for six more weeks or not is anyone's guess.

**BillHi:** Punxsutawney?

**DeborahLS:** right. I grew up in Mercer, Pa. and went to college in Indiana, Pa. I love the Groundhog Day movie.

**BillHi:** Deborah is right, of course. And the groundhog is almost exactly right because six weeks from 2 February is almost 20 March.

**BillHi:** And 20 march is the end of winter, ie., the beginning of spring.

**BillHi:** Okay, here comes another question. I was just in Costa Rica in mid-February.

**BillHi:** Costa Rica is in central America between Nicaragua and Panama and is thought of as a tropical country.

**BJ:** swoons over the gorgeous photos Bill took

**BillHi:** Does Costa Rica have the same seasons we have: summer, fall, winter, spring?

**BillHi:** (I love it when you swoon, BJ)

**BJ** chuckles. Being so close to the Equator, would they be affected by seasons, Bill?

**DeborahLS:** It's still in the Northern Hemisphere, so yes?

**DeborahLS:** the seasons would tend to "look" the same, though. The signs wouldn't be as distinct.

**SusanR .** o O ( subtle changes with each season )

**BillHi:** Okay, Deborah, you've got it. Costa Rica is north of the equator and in the Northern Hemisphere, so it indeed would have the same seasons.

**BJ** hands Deborah a gold star

**BillHi:** But, as BJ says, the seasons are more subtle.

**DeborahLS:** I'm doing SO much better than I did in 7th grade when my World Cultures teacher talked about direct rays of the noonday sun and I thought she was talking about some directories.

**BillHi:** So even though Sue has six months of winter in Canada, there's almost no "winter" in Costa Rica.

**BillHi:** In fact, they tend to think of the "rainy" season and the "dry" season rather than winter and summer.

**BillHi:** My whole point for this entire discussion is that when you're dealing with nature and science and students, you have to be careful about what kind of questions you ask and what kind of answers you want.

**BillHi:** The astronomical definition of spring is completely quantitative and measurable, while some of the answer you gave were qualitative or less-well-defined or less-measurable.

**BillHi:** Make sense?

**BJ** is allowed to have artistic license

**DeborahLS:** makes sense

**BillHi:** (BJ is allowed to do anything she wants, being the Queen of Multitasking.)

**BJ** blushes

**DeborahLS:** Science is, after all, supposed to exemplify quantitative and measurable.

**BillHi:** Okay, let's all be artistic. Deborah, what's your favorite SIGN of spring?

**DeborahLS:** seriously -- flowers, humorously -- sandals

**BillHi:** BJ?

**BJ:** odd...I thought it was green and buds...

**BillHi:** Sue?

**BJ:** but I really appreciate the longer days

**BillHi:** Oh, I forgot. Sue has no spring.

**SusanR:** the day I can start biking and sit in an outdoor cafe?

**DeborahLS:** So Bill, what's your favorite sign?

**BillHi:** Well, what I'd like to do now is look at my Web site for Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History

**BillHi:** Ooops. BJ. My favorite sign of spring is the arrival of the first Ruby-throated Hummingbird.

**DeborahLS:** could you put the URL here?

**BillHi:** Well, we're going there right now. It's at <http://www.hiltonpond.org> . Just click on it and you'll be there.

**BillHi:** You got it?

**BJ:** Bill, please tell our new participants about the newsletter

**DeborahLS:** got it.

**BJ** . o O ( Bill's photos are to die for, Deborah )

**DeborahLS:** I'm going to them right now.

**BillHi:** Okay. Deborah, this is a massive Web site with lots of info. Scroll down to the box called "This week at Hilton pond."

**SusanR:** Bill, I am quite concerned...many of our bird species may become extinct within the next few years..

**SusanR:** ..according to a recent news report here

**BillHi:** Then click on the link to "Sharp-shin Revisted."

**BillHi:** It's at <http://www.hiltonpond.org/ThisWeek040301.html>

**BillHi:** Deborah?

**BillHi:** Hmmm. She must have gotten hypnotized.

**BillHi:** Sue, those news reports are old news to ecologists but new news to the news media.

**DeborahLS:** I started reading the article. BJ is right about the photos.

**BillHi:** Thanks to both of you.

**SusanR** nods

**BillHi**: Scroll back up to the top of the essay about the hawk.

**DeborahLS**: I'm there.

**BillHi**: You'll see that this is installment #213.

**BillHi**: Right below that there's a link to "preceding week." Click on it.

**DeborahLS**: Are you trying to tell me I have a lot to catch up on?

**BillHi**: Now you should be a at an essay about my trip to Iowa.

**DeborahLS**: did it.

**BillHi**: You bet!

**BillHi**: Now click to the week before that--it will be installment 211.

**BillHi**: Got it?

**DeborahLS**: Yes.

**BJ**: Deborah, Bill does Nuts About Nature on the second Tuesday of the month

**BillHi**: Okay. here are the Costa Rica photos. But before you look at them . . .

**DeborahLS**: c'mon I'm waiting.

**BillHi**: You can get a free on-line subscription to "This week at Hilton Pond" by sending a blank e-mail with SUBSCRIBE as the subject to <mailto:thisweek@hiltonpond.org>

**BillHi**: Okay, you can look now.

**DeborahLS**: simply amazed.

**BillHi**: many teachers find "This Week" to be a valuable resource for their students.

**BillHi**: And the search engine on each page of the Hilton Pond Web site allows them to find all sorts of stuff.

**BillHi**: Please bookmark <http://www.hiltonpond.org> and spread the word.

**BJ**: Thanks, Bill. Great discussion

**DeborahLS**: I just subscribed. I'm going to send out the info to my teachers tomorrow.

**DeborahLS**: Thanks, Bill.

**BillHi**: Great!

**BillHi**: Well, we're at the end of the hour, so let me say "Happy Spring! (almost)"

**BJ** waves goodnight.

**DeborahLS** left the room.

**BillHi**: BJ and Sue, let me know when--or if--spring gets to you two.

**BJ**: Spring is a state of mind

**BillHi**: Sounds like a song title.

**SusanR**: I feel a bit of a spring in my step!

**BillHi**: Excellent. See you next month I hope.

**BillHi**: Bye to all.

**SusanR**: Thanks Bill