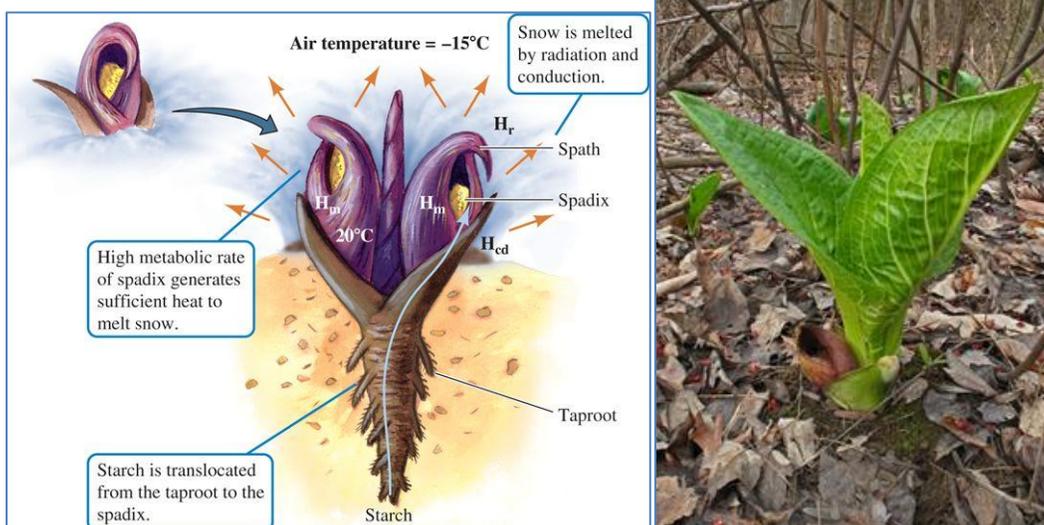




Ranger Marcy's Acorn Adventure: Hike the Winter Air Line Trail!

Things to look for!

Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*): A true harbinger of spring, the skunk cabbage is often seen as early as March with its mottled purple, red, green or brown horn pushing up through the ice and snow. Sometimes if you dig under the leaves you will find some coming up! The **horns are the flower** of the skunk cabbage and it **grows in moist areas**. The common name refers to the resemblance of the young leaves to cabbage and the unpleasant odor emitted by the plant. The species name, *foetidus*, means "evil smelling." Both the smell and the reddish color of the plant help to **attract carrion flies**. As the plant grows, it **produces heat recorded to be 27 degrees F warmer than the outside air temperature**. This heat helps protect the bud from cold weather and intensifies the smell thus attracting pollinators. After pollination the leaves uncurl and grow to heights of two feet or more.



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Lakes (like Pine Acre Lake, although Pine Acres is very shallow) are deep water habitats that **do not have trees or shrubs growing above the surface of the water**. Located in depressions created by natural processes or dammed river channels, lakes provide habitat for bullfrogs, snapping turtles, painted turtles, beaver, and river otter as well as a wide variety of fish and birds. All depend on lakes for their continued existence.

Open spaces provide a variety of habitats for wildlife and include meadows, agricultural fields, early succession shrub areas, roadsides, and abandoned orchards. Between these areas and the habitats previously described there are transitional areas such as field-forest edges, **rock walls** and other features that also provide important habitats for many species. Red fox, raccoons, skunks, cottontails, chipmunks, many birds and plant species such as milkweed are often found in open space habitats.

Animal Tracks are easiest to see in the snow and in soft soil. Look around ponds, where animals go for a drink or to find buried eggs. You can also find tunnels in fields where field mice, moles and voles love to run. Look for trails that might be a little too small for people, because once animals make a trail, they use it a lot, just like we do. Keep the tracking guide handy so you can figure out who made the tracks you see.

Birds! Listen and look for the birds in the forest along the Air Line Trail. Who do you hear and see? Bring your binoculars and bird book with you if you love to learn about birds in The Last Green Valley!

Trees! Can we find both deciduous (leaves fall off) and conifers (evergreens with needles that stay on all year long). Look for white pine, oak trees, maple trees, hemlock trees. What else??

Litter? We hope we don't find any, but if we do, we've got a garbage bag. TLGV Acorns never litter!

Our games today!

Stuck in the Mud – *use this game to figure out why we sometimes have mud, and sometimes don't!*

All the fun of mud without the mess!

4 or more players, in an open area.

Pick someone to be "it."

When "it" tags someone, they're stuck in the mud and can't move.

To get unstuck, someone else has to tag you on the shoulder.

Once everybody gets tagged, the game is over.

Tails – *use this game to discuss all the animals that have tails – which one will you be?*

This game will have you chasing after your own tail!

4 or more players, in an open area.

To play, you need one piece of string or cloth for every player.

Each player hangs the cloth from their back pocket or waistband. (This is your "tail.")

On the word, "go," each player tries to take the other players' tails.

When your tail is taken or falls off, sit down, but you're not out. Grab the tail off of anybody who runs by. If you get it, hang it on as your new tail and start running around again.

Acorn Adventures are sponsored by



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