



Spring Has Sprung

WRITTEN BY KATHY KRANKING ■ ILLUSTRATED BY CHRISTIAN SLADE

“Today is the first day of spring!” exclaimed Ricky Raccoon. He was with Flora Skunk, Mitzi Mink, and Bizzie Beaver outside his tree home.

“I think we should celebrate,” said Flora.

“Me, too!” said Mitzi. “But how?”

The friends all started thinking. After a minute, Bizzie had an idea. “I know!” he said. “We can go looking for signs of spring.”

Ricky grinned. “That’s a great idea, Bizzie,” he said excitedly. And everyone set off.

They hadn’t gone very far when Flora pointed up at a branch. “Look!” she said. “Baby leaves.” All along the branch were bright green buds. They were just starting to open. The friends looked around. They saw that all the trees had buds along their branches.

“Soon the woods will be all green and leafy,” said Mitzi.

“Let’s see what else we can find,” said Ricky. They began walking again. Suddenly Bizzie stopped. “Listen,” he said. They all stood still and listened. The sweet sounds of birds singing filled the air.

“How pretty,” said Flora. “That’s a great sign of spring.”

“I see another one,” said Mitzi. She was pointing at the ground. The friends gathered around her to look. “Ants!” exclaimed Ricky. “You sure wouldn’t see those during the icy winter.” The friends watched as the ants followed one another into some dry leaves.

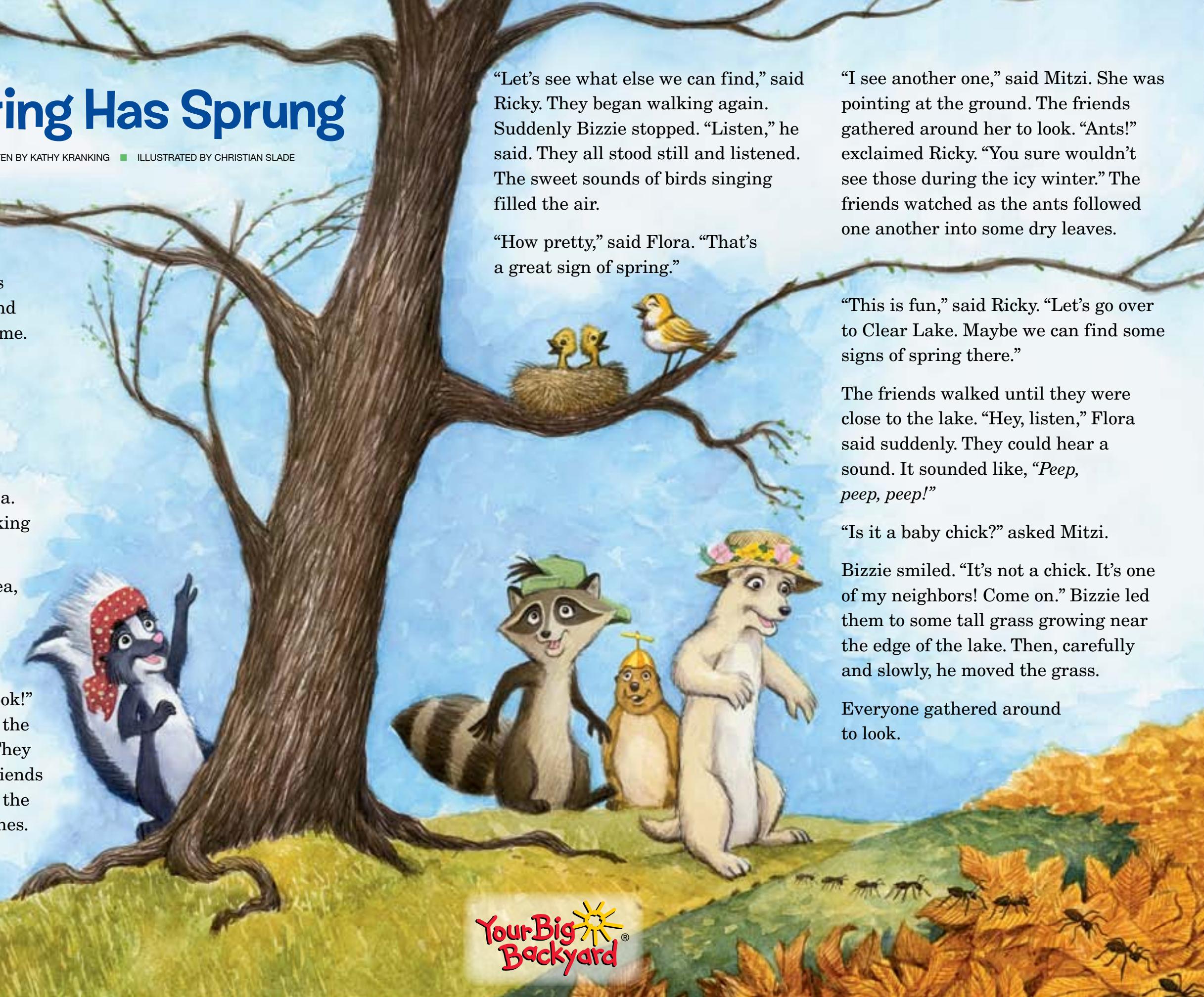
“This is fun,” said Ricky. “Let’s go over to Clear Lake. Maybe we can find some signs of spring there.”

The friends walked until they were close to the lake. “Hey, listen,” Flora said suddenly. They could hear a sound. It sounded like, “Peep, peep, peep!”

“Is it a baby chick?” asked Mitzi.

Bizzie smiled. “It’s not a chick. It’s one of my neighbors! Come on.” Bizzie led them to some tall grass growing near the edge of the lake. Then, carefully and slowly, he moved the grass.

Everyone gathered around to look.





“Let’s go see,” said Flora quietly. The four friends tiptoed around to the other side of the bushes. But instead of a baby deer, they saw something else.

There were their friends Bonnie Bluebird and Chester Chipmunk! Bonnie and Chester looked as surprised to see Ricky and his pals as they were to see Bonnie and Chester.

“We haven’t seen you in a long time,” said Ricky.

“A frog!” exclaimed Flora. The little frog was singing. As the frog sang, his throat made a big bubble.

“He’s called a spring peeper,” said Bizzie. “That bubble helps him sing really loud.” The friends watched the frog for another minute. Then they started walking again.

“We sure have seen lots of signs of spring,” said Ricky. Just then they heard a rustling sound. It was coming from some nearby bushes. “Hey,” whispered Ricky. “Do you think there’s a baby deer hiding in the bushes?”

“We’re on a hunt!” said Bonnie.

“Yes,” added Chester. “We’re hunting for signs of spring.”

“That’s exactly what *we’re* doing!” Flora shouted. Everybody began to laugh.

“Hey, I just thought of another sign of spring,” Ricky said.

“What is it?” asked Chester.

“Well,” said Ricky, “all of us looking for signs of spring is another sign of spring. After all, we wouldn’t be doing this in the middle of winter!”

“You’re right!” Flora said.

By now the sun was beginning to set. “Come on, everybody,” said Bizzie. He turned and began to walk toward his home. “You too, Bonnie and Chester,” he added.

“Where are you going, Bizzie?” asked Mitzi. “Are you going to look for more signs of spring?”

Bizzie grinned a big grin, showing his long front teeth. “Nope,” he said. “I’m going home to look for signs of dinner—and you’re all invited!”

