

# National Museum of Ireland – Natural History

## Teachers Resource Pack – Primary





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# Introduction

## The Natural History Museum – A History of Learning

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“May the building...open for the coming generations be worthy temples of science, art and learning, at whose shrine they may be taught”

Lord Carlisle, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, laying the foundation stone of the Natural History Museum on 7th March 1856.

### The Origin of The Natural History Museum of Ireland

Beginning with the purchase of the Leskean collection of minerals by the Royal Dublin Society (RDS) in the 1780s, the purpose of the Natural History collection has always been “to aid the advancement of knowledge in Ireland”.

Today the Museum forms a part of the National Museum of Ireland, and the Education and Outreach Department aims to act as an advocate for audiences by developing and providing learning programmes, resources and opportunities at the Museum for all visitors.

### History of the building

The Natural History building was built in 1856 to house the RDS’s growing collections, which had expanded continually since the late 18th Century. The building is a ‘cabinet-style’ museum designed to showcase a wide-ranging and comprehensive zoological collection, and has changed little in over a century.

Often described as a ‘museum of a museum’, it provides a glimpse of the natural world that has delighted generations of visitors since the doors opened in 1857.

The building was originally built as an extension to Leinster House and in 1909 a new entrance facing Merrion Street was constructed- today this is the Museum’s main entrance.

The museum today holds a display of approx. 10,000 animals and fossils. The ground floor is dedicated to Irish animals, featuring Giant Irish Deer skeletons and a variety of mammals, birds and fish. On first floor visitors can view animals from around the world, as well as large mammals such as the giraffe, elephant, moose and two whales suspended from the ceiling.



# General Museum Information

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## How to Get there

**On Foot** – Approximately it is a ten minute walk from Grafton Street or St Stephen's Green and a 15 minute walk from O'Connell Street or Dublin Docklands.

**Bus** – Routes serving Merrion Square, Merrion Row and St. Stephen's Green. As timetables and routes are subject to change, please see [www.dublinbus.ie](http://www.dublinbus.ie) for up-to-date information.

**LUAS** – The Museum is a ten minute walk from St Stephen's Green Green Line Luas stop. The nearest Red Line Luas Stop is Abbey Street a 15 walk.

**DART/Train** – The Museum is a five minute walk from Pearse station on Westland Row.

**Coach Parking** – There is on-street parking and coach parking available on Merrion Square.

## Opening Hours

**Tues – Sat** – 10am–5pm

**Sun** – 2pm–5pm

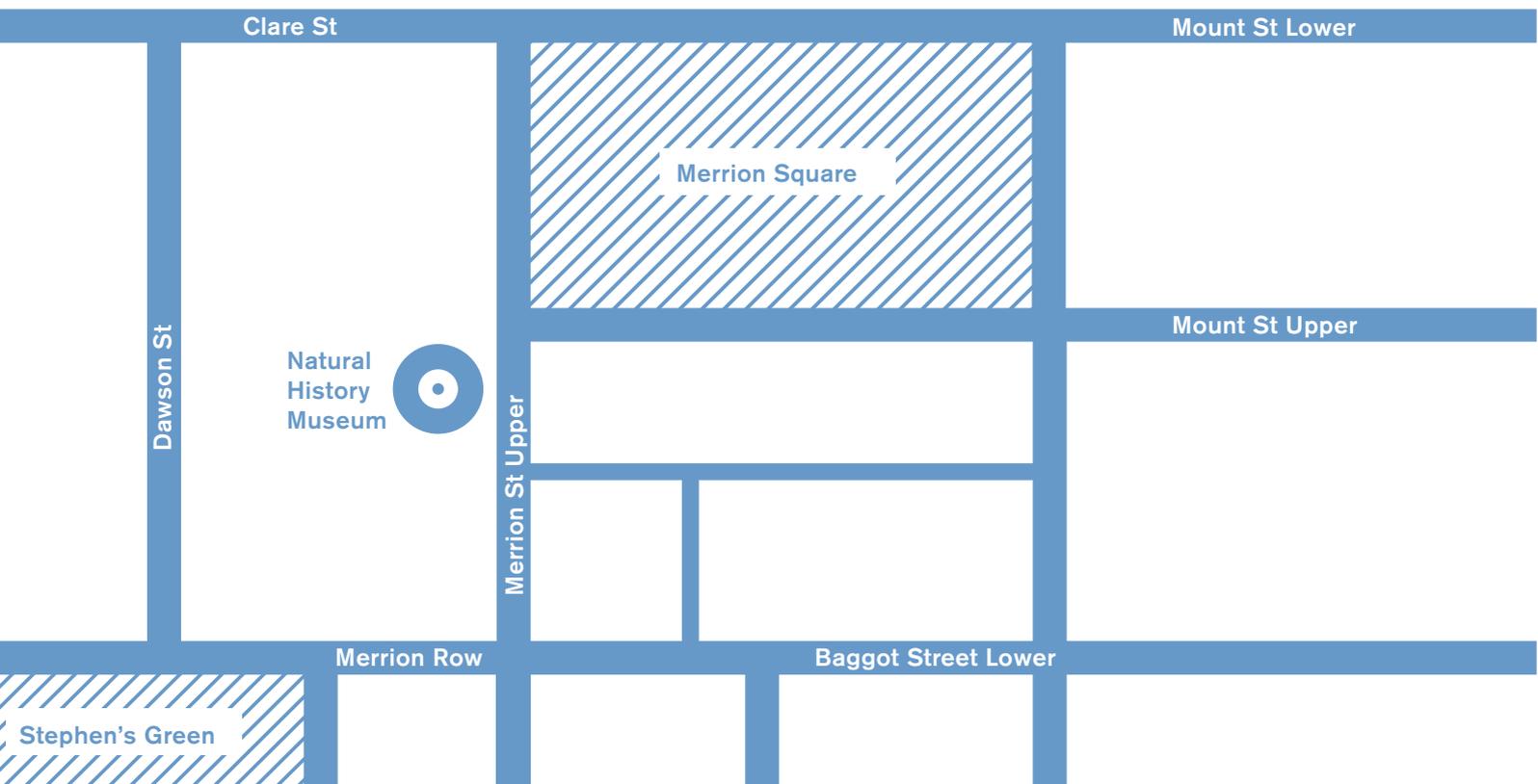
**Mon** – Closed

## Facilities & Accessibility

The ground floor exhibitions and one restroom are wheelchair accessible. There is regrettably no wheelchair accessibility to the first floor exhibitions.

There is no Museum Café or lunch room facility at this site. Merrion Square Park and Stephen's Green and the Grafton Street area, which are all within walking distance all provide a variety of options for picnicking and lunch.

For Further Information on Facilities:  
[info@museum.ie](mailto:info@museum.ie)  
+353 (0) 1 6777444



# Organising your Groups Visit

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## How many students can you bring?

We recommend a supervision ratio of one adult/group leader/teacher to every 15 students. If you are bringing a large group to the Museum (over 40 students), it is necessary to split the group up into smaller groups and stagger your entry by 15 minutes. As we are a small building, our entry limit is 60 students per hour.

Primary carers are responsible for the safety of children in their care while visiting the National Museum of Ireland, and group leaders must remain in sight of their charges at all times. For further information consult our Child Protection Policy, available on our website: [www.museum.ie](http://www.museum.ie)

## How long can your visit last?

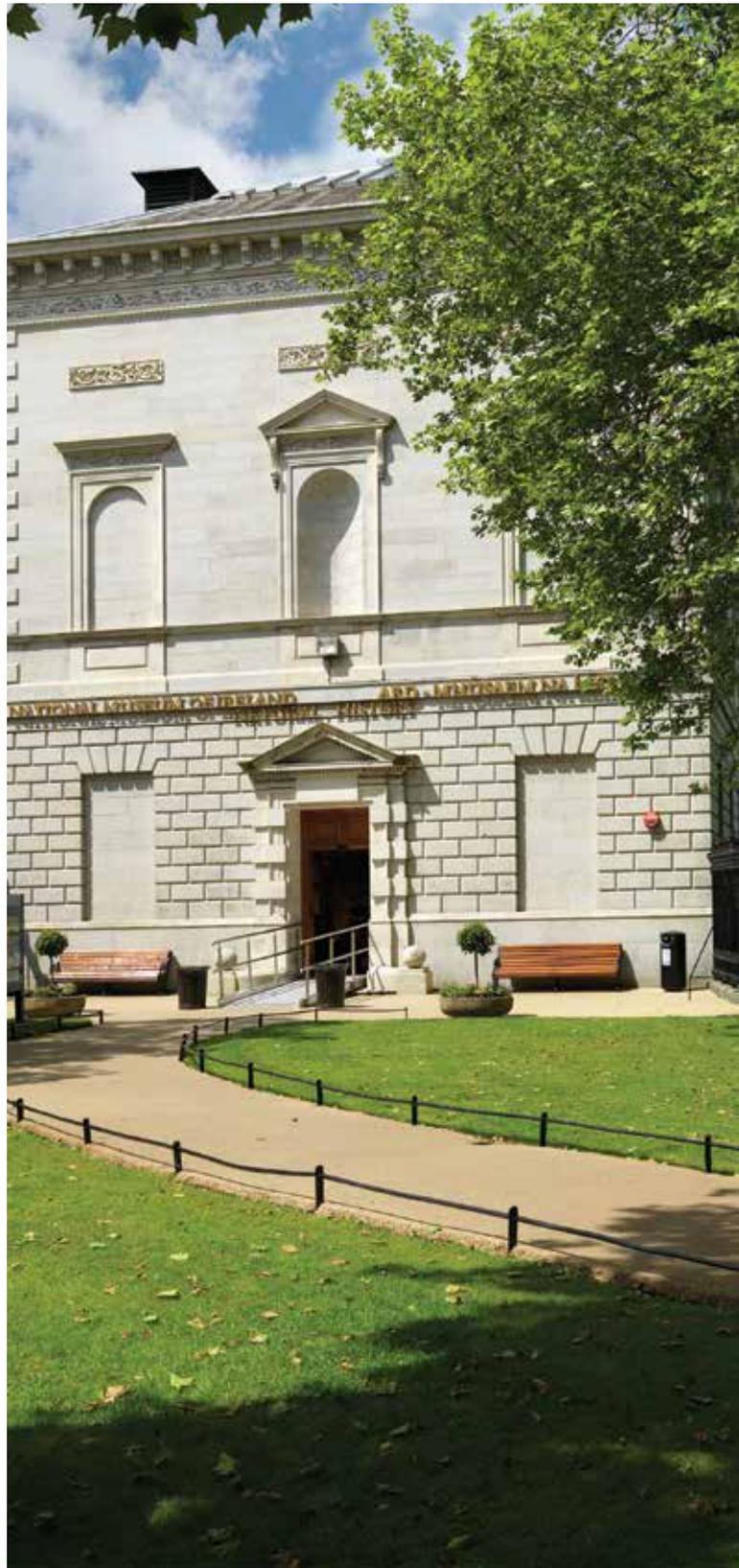
The recommended visit duration is 45 minutes.

## How do I book a visit?

All groups intending to visit the Museum must book through the Bookings Office. To Contact the Booking Office email [bookings@museum.ie](mailto:bookings@museum.ie) or phone +353 (0) 1 6486453

## Is the Natural History Museum wheelchair accessible?

The ground floor of the museum is fully wheelchair accessible, with a wheelchair toilet to the right of the reception desk



# Resources for your Visit

## Resources for your class at the National Museum and online

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The Natural History Museum has two dedicated education areas:

### Discovery Zone

This hands-on area has two mobile units, Life on Land and The Life Aquatic. Groups can look at and learn about the different species that live in each environment and inspect our badger and pilot whale skull.

In Life on Land various different themes are explored; life in the earth such as that of creepy crawlies like the tarantula, life in the air which explores how birds beaks fit their lifestyle and mammals that live on land such as a wolf. In The Life Aquatic objects are grouped in themes such as freshwater insects.

#### Animals in the carts include...

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Badger

---

Pilot Whale Skull

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Dolphin Skull

---

Common Freshwater Insects

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Small Mammal Skulls

---

Common Seal Skull

---

Tarantula

---

Common Terrestrial Insects

---

Golden Eagle Skull

---

Spoonbill Skull

---

Raven Skull

---

Dolphin's Pentadactyl Limb

### Reading Area

This area was developed to provide an opportunity for visitors to sit and read more about the many animals which are on display and about other topics related to Natural History.

The selection of books is aimed at providing insights into the varied and exciting work of Natural History. This space also provides seating so that the Victorian displays and buildings as well as the exhibits can be reflected upon.

#### In the reading area you will find books on...

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Zoology

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Conservation

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Geology

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Earth Sciences

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Irish Biodiversity

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Reference Books

### Activity Sheets

The Education and Outreach Department has created a number of activity sheets, which are suitable for Primary level students and will help focus a group visit. These sheets are available online in the Explore and Learn Section of the website, [www.museum.ie](http://www.museum.ie).

Please let us know if you would like us to reserve a hard copy of activity sheets for your pupils, only one copy is available per child.

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**My Favourite Animal/An tAinmhi Is Fearr Liom**  
(Junior Primary classes)

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**The Zoo in My Garden**  
(Junior to Senior Primary classes)

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**Everything Counts**  
(Senior Primary classes)

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**Seasonal Trails** (Senior Primary classes):

Do Not Disturb! (Winter)

Spring into Action (Spring)

Summer Sun (Summer)

Busy Bees (Autumn)

Below are a number of curriculum-linked suggested itineraries and projects ideas for your classes' visit, which will enable you to lead a tour of the Museum on your own for your class. The information and suggestions were designed to provide information and to assist in planning themes and topics to explore during the visit to the Museum and which will build on what the pupils have learned and are exploring in the classroom. We would advise once you have chosen an itinerary to make a visit to the exhibitions in advance of bringing a group in.

Please note the itineraries of the suggested tours below are not offered by the Education and Outreach Department. For information on programmes with Museum educators go to the Schools Programme on the Museum website.

### Curriculum Links

Whatever you decide the museum's collection can provide you with multiple ways of linking into the Primary curriculum. These links are outlined below:

<b>Science</b>	
<b>Skills Development:</b>	Working scientifically
<b>Strands:</b>	Living things; Environmental awareness & care.
<b>Geography</b>	
<b>Skills/concept development:</b>	A sense of place and space; Maps, globes and graphical skills; Geographical investigation skills.
<b>Strands:</b>	Natural environments; Environmental awareness and care
<b>History</b>	
<b>Skills/concept development:</b>	Time and chronology; Change and continuity.
<b>Strands:</b>	Story; Life, society, work in the past; Continuity and change over time
<b>SPHE</b>	
<b>Strands:</b>	Myself; Myself and the wider world
<b>Visual Arts</b>	
<b>Skills/concept development:</b>	Concepts
<b>Strands:</b>	Drawing

# Suggested Itineraries

Resources for your class at the National Museum and online

## Irish Biodiversity Tour (Ground Floor)

This route enables pupils to see and observe displays of past and present Irish mammals, fish and birds, which can act as prompts for discussions about Irish ecosystems, human influences on biodiversity and why some animals are extinct to Ireland.

### Ground Floor

1 – Giant Irish Deer

2 – Fox Family

3 – Golden Eagle

4 – Hares

5 – Heron

6 – Otter Family

7 – Sun Fish

8 – Bats

9 – Black & Brown Rat

### Life on Land Cart

10 – Badger, Grey Wolf

### Life Aquatic Cart

11 – Pilot Whale, Dolphin and Seal Skull

## Curriculum Links

### Science

Living Things (Variety and characteristics of living things)

Environmental awareness and care

### Geography

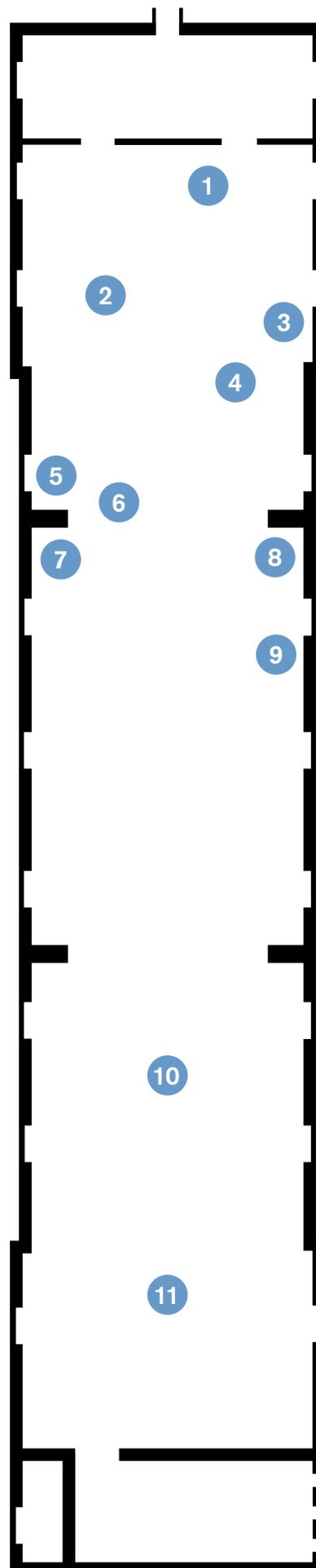
Environmental awareness and care

### SPHE

Myself; Myself and the wider world

### Other possible topics for discussion

Could also be used as an introduction to habitat and ecosystems through teacher led discussion on Ireland's climate, environment and the habitats that it provides



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## The Bogland Tour (Ground Floor)

This route enables pupils to see and observe displays of past and present Irish mammals, fish and birds, which can act as prompts for discussions about Irish ecosystems, human influences on biodiversity and why some animals are extinct to Ireland.

### Ground Floor

- 1 – Fox Family
- 2 – Perigrine Falcon
- 3 – Snipe
- 4 – Hares
- 5 – Heron
- 6 – Otter Family
- 7 – Moths & Butterflies
- 8 – Beetles

### Life Aquatic Cart

- 9 – Freshwater Insects

## Curriculum Links

### Science

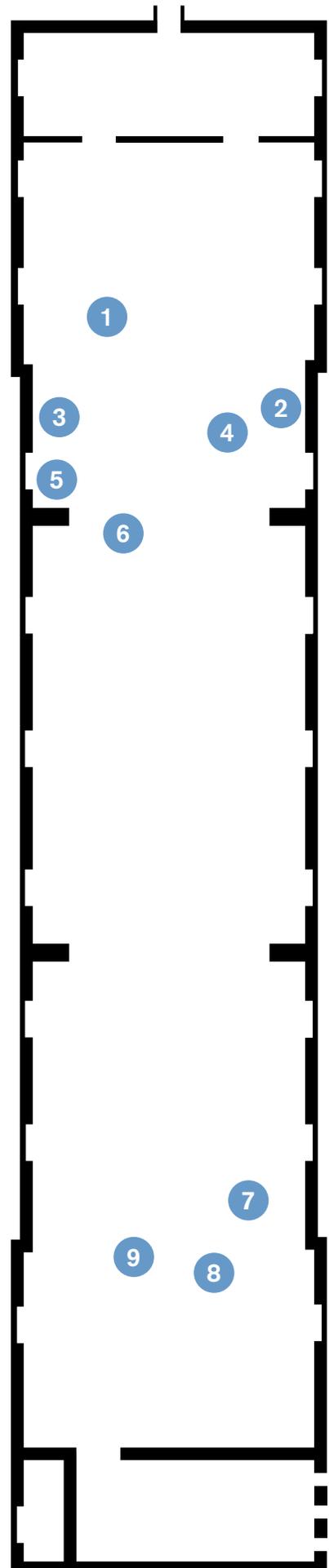
Living Things (Variety and characteristics of living things)  
Environmental awareness and care

### Geography

Environmental awareness and care

### Other possible topics for discussion

Could also be used as an introduction to conservation, both animal and wetland, by exploring the plight of the Large Heath Butterfly and also as an introduction to the conflict of interest over natural resource exploitation, Large Heat Butterfly (habitat) Versus Humans (exploitation of peat from Bog-land habitat).



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## Human Influenced Extinction and Endangertment Tour (First Floor)

This route brings pupils along a journey around the world to view displays of animals which are endangered and close to extinction, prompting discussion about topics such as how humans are affecting the habitats and future of these animals.

### First Floor

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1 – Gorilla

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2 – Oil Slick Diorama

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3 – Tiger

---

4 – Grey Wolf

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5 – Polar Bear

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6 – American Bison

---

7 – Giraffe

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8 – Giant Panda

## Curriculum Links

### Science

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Living Things (Variety and characteristics of living things)

Enviornmental awareness and care

### History

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Life, society, work and culture in the past

Continuity and change over time

### Geography

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Enviornmental awareness and care

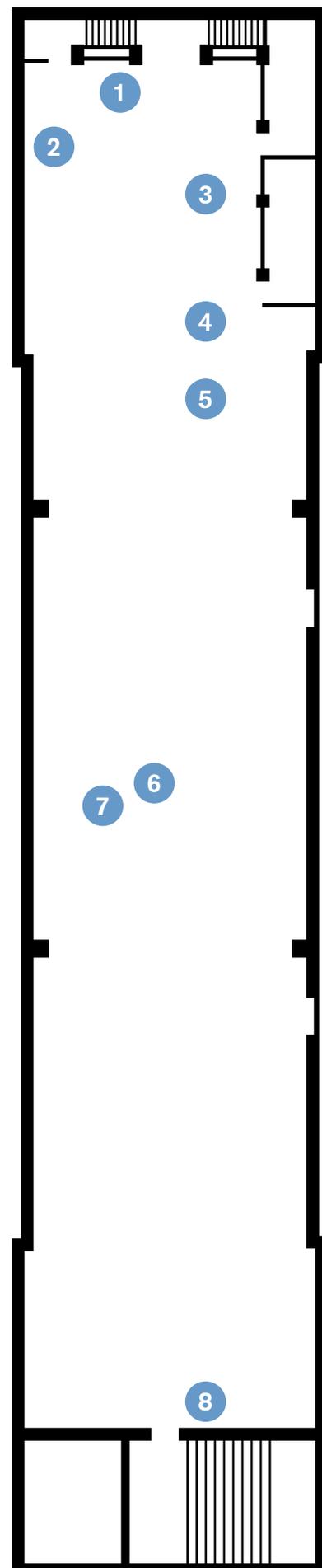
### SPHE

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Myself and the wider world

### Other possible topics for discussion

Could also be used as an introduction to habitat and ecosystems through teacher led discusssion on Ireland's climate, enviornment and the habitats that it provides



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## The Continental Challenge Tour (First Floor)

The route brings enables pupils to see displays relating to each of the seven continents, prompting discussion as to the reasons, such as climate, environment, continental drift, that different types of animals are found on different continents.

### First Floor

#### Europe

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5 – Fox

---

2 – Rabbits & Hares

#### Africa

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1 – Gorilla

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10 – Giraffe

#### Asia

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3 – Tiger

---

11 – Sumatran Rhino

#### North America

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9 – American Bison

---

6 – Great Panda

#### South America

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4 – Puma

---

12 – Great Anteater

#### Australia

---

14 – Great Kangaroo

---

13 – Tasmanian Devil

#### Antartica

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8 – Crab-eater Seal

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7 – Weddell Seal

## Curriculum Links

### Science

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Living Things (Variety and characteristics of living things)

Enviornmental awareness and care

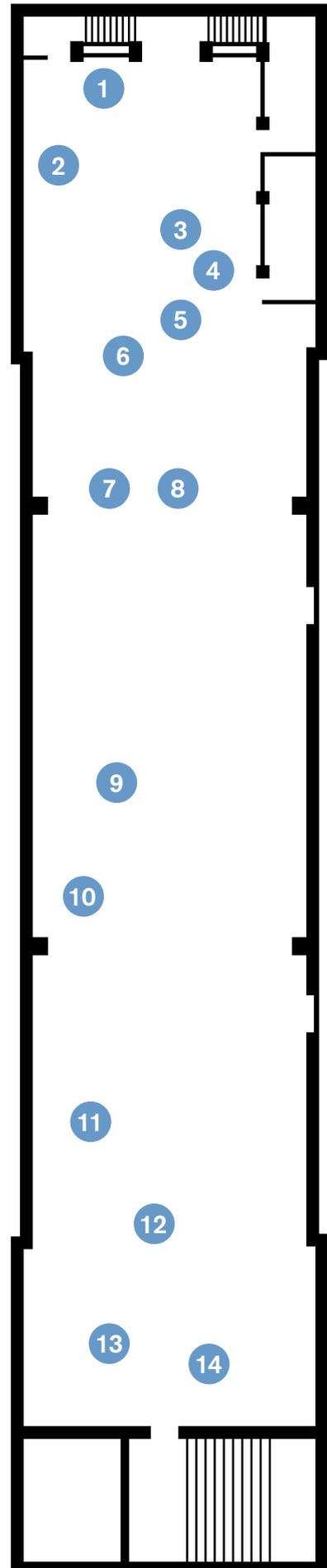
### Geography

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Enviornmental awareness and care

A Sense of Place and Space

Perhaps best used with a print out map of the continents



# Follow up in the Classroom

The activities below can be amended by the teacher to the standard and level of the pupils in question

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A classroom lesson or an independent pupil research project on the [Golden Eagle re-introduction scheme](#) in Glenveagh, Co. Donegal. The project should focus on the pros and cons of the re-introduction of such a large predator to the Irish ecosystem. The following website will be very useful: [www.goldeneagle.ie](http://www.goldeneagle.ie)

A classroom lesson or an independent pupil research project on [The Irish Basking Shark Project](#). Pupils should focus on why the project was set up, what they do and what they aim to achieve. The following website will be very helpful: [www.baskingshark.ie](http://www.baskingshark.ie)

A classroom lesson on [animal adaptation to various environments](#). Followed by pupils designing their own animal. Pupils must explain the rationale behind each feature of their animal. Pupils could design an animal for the following environments: Hot Desert, Tundra, Tropical Rainforest, African Savannah, Tropical Swamp and Ocean.

Classroom discussion or independent pupil research project on [why Kangaroos are only found in Australia](#). Issues such as climate, habitat, food and ancient continental drift should be addressed.

“There is a large population of suburban foxes in Dublin, with as many as 5 families per square kilometer.” Pupils could independently [investigate why foxes are so adaptable](#) to the urban environment. Pupils should focus on diet and habitat.

Write an essay entitled, “[Why do Giraffes have such long necks?](#)” Pupils should focus on natural selection and habitat based adaptations.

Pupils as a class [create a wall display for the classroom depicting the animals found on each of the continents](#). The wall display should take the form of a large collage where animals are drawn, painted or stuck onto each of the continents on a large wall sized map.



# My Natural History Museum Project

The following is a suggested activity aimed to focus your visit to the museum.

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## Before you visit the Museum

Explain to your class they are to choose specimens, six in total, for an exhibition of their own when on their visit to the museum. All specimens chosen must link into a theme, depending on the class' age and ability.

## At the Museum

The students must carefully choose specimens for their exhibition and note any information given about the animals in their cases. They might also like to sketch and describe them and/or take a digital photo of each choice. Ensure they record all the information they will need to use back in school.

## After Your Visit

Once the exhibitions are drafted, students can research their animals, and decide what order they'd like to put them in. The class can then:

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Share the different exhibitions they have made with one and other

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Make a presentation explaining their different choices

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Create a display or set up an exhibition in the classroom

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Once completed older classes could design an advertisement for the exhibition to encourage the other classes to visit it or write an article about the exhibition.

## Theme Examples

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My Favourite Animals

---

Scary Animals

---

Mammals of the World

---

Nocturnal Animals

---

Rainforest Animals

---

Irish Animals

---

Endangerment

---

Animal Adaptations

The students must explain the reasons for their choice of exhibits. Themes can be given, selected by students or based on an existing class project.

## Learning Outcomes

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To understand current issues and themes in wildlife and natural history.

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To look closely at exhibits in the museum galleries and choose appropriate specimens for an exhibition with a given or selected theme.

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Be able to explain reasons for the choice and make selections for the exhibition according to a given or selected theme.

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To learn to tell a story using exhibits.

## Curriculum Links

### Science

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Living Things

Environmental awareness and care

### History (senior classes)

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Life, society, work and culture in the past

Continuity and change over time

### Geography

---

Environmental awareness and care

Human environments, Natural environments

### SPHE

---

Myself and the wider world

Environmental awareness and care

# My Natural History Museum

Design your own Natural History Museum! Choose a title, describe your museum, and then choose six animals to go into your exhibition cases.

TITLE

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DESCRIPTION

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Animal 1.

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Reason for Choice

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Animal 2.

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Reason for Choice

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Animal 3.

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Reason for Choice

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Animal 4.

Reason for Choice

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Animal 5.

Reason for Choice

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Animal 6.

Reason for Choice

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# Guess Who?

The following is a suggested activity aimed to focus your visit to the museum.

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## Before you visit the Museum

Explain to your class they are to look at the drawings on the page and work out what it is of- is it a leg, foot, tooth etc. Once they decide what type of animal it might be, they need to draw in the rest of the animal in class. You can have a class discussion before and after the drawing is complete.

## At the Museum

The students must look at the animals in the cases and find the animals whose original body parts were given to them. The animals and their locations are given overleaf, all animals are in the Irish Room on the ground floor of the museum.

The class must compare their drawings to the real animal, and see what features they got right. Make sure they record all the information they will need to use back in school.

## After your visit

Once back at the classroom, the class can have a discussion on the animals they saw. It might be an idea to develop their imaginary animals further, giving them names, talking about what habitat they live in, and what food they might eat.

## Learning Outcomes

To recognise the body part of an animal – ears, beak, claw, tail.

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To create an animal from just the body part shown.

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To look closely at exhibits in the museum galleries and recognise the animal from its distinctive body part. Comparison of imaginary animal with animal on display at the museum.

## Curriculum Links

### Science

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Living Things

Environmental awareness and care

### Art

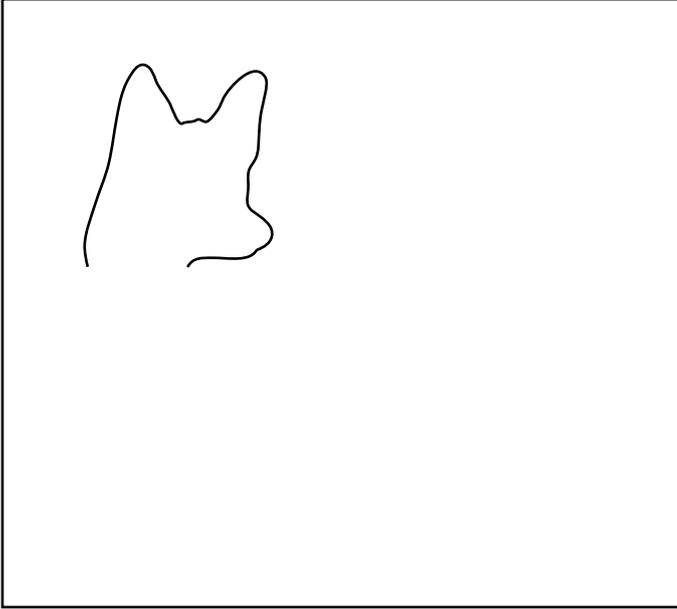
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Drawing

# GUESS WHO?

Who am I? I've left a body part to give you a clue!

**In the Classroom: Draw the rest of me!**



**In the Museum: Tick the boxes below.**

Who am I?

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Do I Have...

- Scales?
- Fur?
- Claws?
- Feathers?
- Paws?
- Fins?
- Horns?
- Antlers?
- How many legs do I have?

Who am I?

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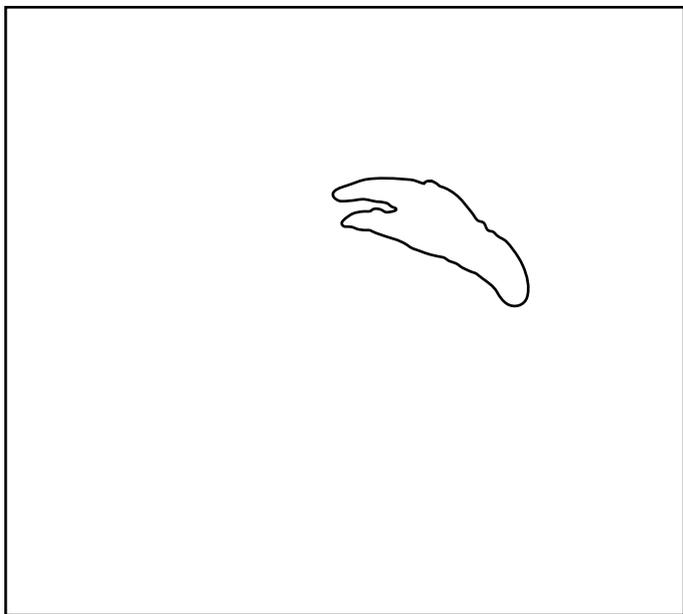
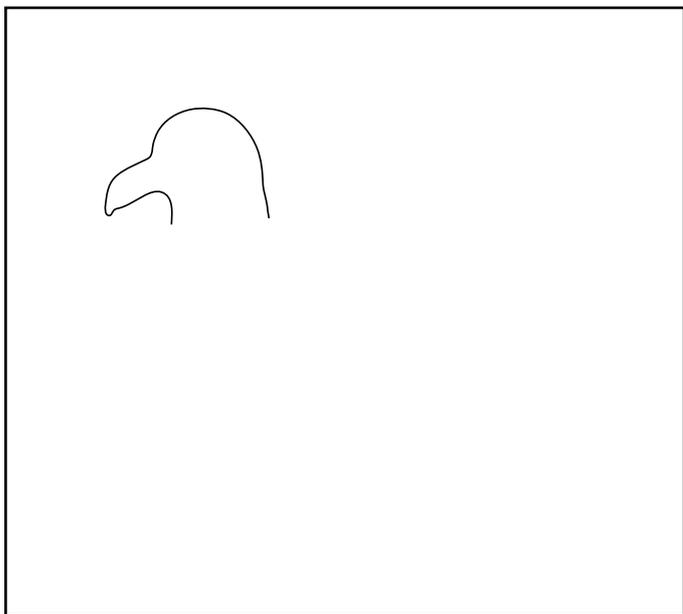
Do I Have...

- Scales?
- Fur?
- Claws?
- Feathers?
- Paws?
- Fins?
- Horns?
- Antlers?
- How many legs do I have?

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Do I Have...

- Scales?
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- Fins?
- Horns?
- Antlers?
- How many legs do I have?

Who am I?

---

Do I Have...

- Scales?
- Fur?
- Claws?
- Feathers?
- Paws?
- Fins?
- Horns?
- Antlers?
- How many legs do I have?

## Guess Who? (Ground Floor)

The class must compare their drawings to the real animal, and see what features they got right. Ensure they record all the information they will need to use back in school.

1



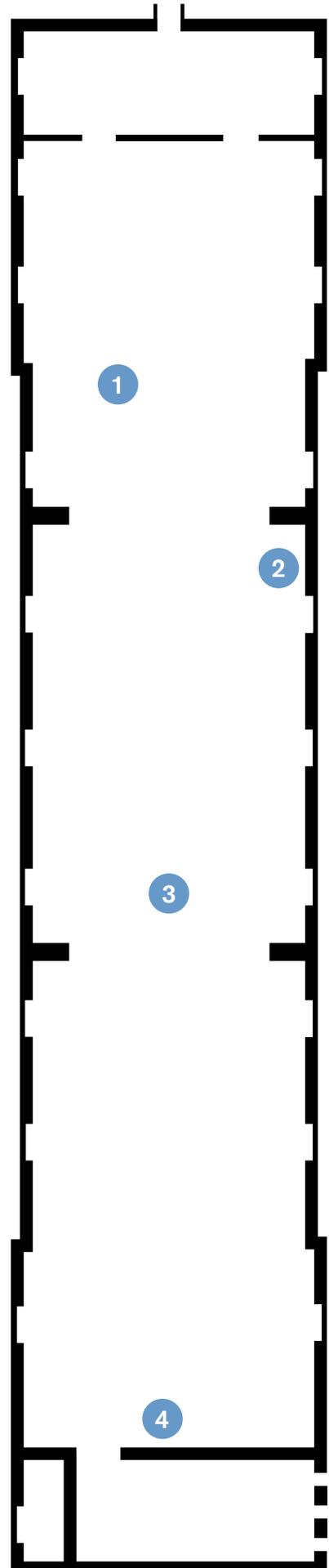
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3



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# Useful Websites and Resources

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## ECO UNESCO

Ireland's Environmental Education & Youth Organisation (affiliated to the World Federation of UNESCO clubs, centres and associations (WFUCA))

[www.ecounesco.ie](http://www.ecounesco.ie)  
[www.ecounesco.ie/resources.aspx](http://www.ecounesco.ie/resources.aspx)



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## Geoschol – Geology for Schools in Ireland

Joint initiative between Trinity College Dublin and the National Museum of Ireland- Natural History

[www.geoschol.com](http://www.geoschol.com)



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## The Geological Survey of Ireland

Education pages.

[www.gsi.ie/education/](http://www.gsi.ie/education/)



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## Environment Protection Agency

Resources for primary schools

[www.epa.ie/researchandeducation/education/primary/](http://www.epa.ie/researchandeducation/education/primary/)



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## Notice Nature

From the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government

[www.noticenature.ie](http://www.noticenature.ie)



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## UN International Year of Biodiversity

[www.cbt.int/2010/about/](http://www.cbt.int/2010/about/)



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## The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species

Searchable Database

[www.iucnredlist.org](http://www.iucnredlist.org)



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## The Golden Eagle Reintroduction Project

[www.goldeneagle.ie](http://www.goldeneagle.ie)



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## ARKive

Multimedia guide to the world's endangered species.

[www.arkive.org](http://www.arkive.org)



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## The Irish Basking Shark Project

[www.baskingshark.ie](http://www.baskingshark.ie)



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## UN International Year of Astronomy (2009)

[www.astronomy2009.org/resources/](http://www.astronomy2009.org/resources/)





