

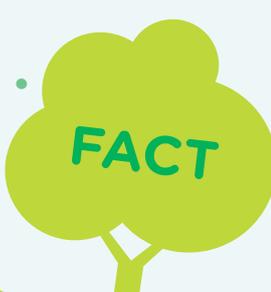
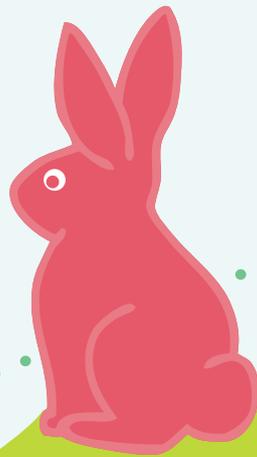


Spring Into  
Action!



It's Spring and all of nature is busy-building nests, looking after young or finding food after the long winter's sleep.

Follow this trail though the museum to find out more about the animals you'll see in action this spring.



FACT

Spring occurs at different times of the year, depending where you are on the planet. In Ireland, Spring starts on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February. In ancient Ireland this date was known as *Imbolg* - a celebration of the longer days and the signs of Spring. We now call it St Brigid's Day or Lá Fhéile Bríde.

**START**  
AT THE SONGBIRD  
CASE AT THE  
TOP LEFT OF THE  
IRISH ROOM



Can you find the **ROBINS** with their nest? There is also a young (juvenile) robin next to them on a perch. Robins are famous for building their nest in strange places- as you can see this pair built theirs in an old tin can!



**FACT**

Robins have up to three broods a year and while the male cares for the first fledglings, the female will be busy building a new nest for the next brood. She does this to reduce the spread of ticks and lice

**Q.1**

Have a look at the young robin on the perch and then the adults standing on the tin can- why do you think the young robin doesn't have a red breast?  
(Circle your answer)

For camouflage

He lost it

He can't fly

**MOVE TO THE  
RIGHT UNTIL YOU  
FIND THE A  
GOLDEN  
EAGLE**



Golden Eagles are birds of prey- they catch smaller animals to eat. They build their nests, called eyries, on cliff ledges. The mother usually lays two eggs in mid March each year, and the parents keep them warm and dry by sitting on them through all types of weather. In early May the eggs hatch and two white fluffy chicks emerge.

**FACT**

The Golden Eagle is an endangered animal and is protected by law in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. It is illegal to harm these birds or their nests.

**Q.2**

Why do you think the Golden Eagle got its name? (Circle your answer)

It likes shiny things

It's a big bird

It has gold coloured feathers on its back and head

**MOVE FURTHER DOWN  
TO THE RIGHT  
UNTIL YOU FIND THE  
HARES AND  
RABBITS**



**FACT**

The saying "As mad as a March hare" comes from the behavior of male hares during the mating season, where it's common for the males to fight over territory by "boxing" (see photo right)

Hares and rabbits appearing are often seen as a sign that spring has arrived, as they are more active in the spring. They also have their babies in spring.



Q.3

Have a look at both the rabbits and hares. In each case there is an animal standing up on his back legs- why?

(Circle your answer)

He's stretching

He's looking out for predators

He's showing off



NOW GO TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM AND FIND THE FOX FAMILY

Q.4

Fox cubs are born between late February and the end of April and usually there is 4 or 5 cubs in the litter. They are born blind and deaf, and their mum (vixen) stays in the den with them for the first three weeks. Their dad (dog) will deliver food to her during this period. If disturbed, the vixen will carry her litter one by one to a new den.



Have a look at the fox family- why are there feathers on the ground? (Circle your answer)

To make a warm bed

They look nice in the den

They had a bird for their dinner

NOW MOVE ALONG THE CASES UNTIL YOU COME TO THE MAGPIE NEST



The Magpie is a member from the crow family and they have a unique nest- a dome of thorny twigs with a hidden side entrance placed high in a tree. The male and female build the nest together, selecting just the right twigs for the nest.

FACT

The name Magpie comes from the old English "pied" meaning "black and white" and "mag" is short for maggot. They are a very intelligent and are the only bird species proven by zoologists to recognise themselves in mirrors!



Q.5

Why do you think magpies build such strange nests? (Circle your answer)

They untidy animals

They're bad at building

To keep predators out

NOW CROSS THE ROOM AND FIND THE SAND MARTINS

Sand martins are a member of the swallow family. The scientific name, *Riparia riparia* comes from the Latin ripa meaning "riverbank". Sand Martin nests are found in river banks, gravel pits, sea-cliffs, drainpipes and even holes in walls! Sand Martins are the first swallow to return to Ireland after the winter, and are known as a "sign of spring"



FACT

Scientists record the "first signs" of the seasons each year- such as the first leaf on a tree, the first frog spawn laid or the first swallow seen. This is known as *phenology* (fen-ol-o-jee) and is used to determine changes in climate patterns- it can be used as a measurement of the impact of climate change on our wildlife.

Q.6

Have a look at the nests here - why do you think the openings are so narrow? (Circle your answer)

To stop the sunshine getting in

The hole was already there

To protect the eggs/chicks



NOW LOOK TO YOUR LEFT AND FIND THE CASE AGAINST THE WALL WITH THE **SALMON AND TROUT**



FACT

There are 66 different kinds, or species, of salmon, trout, whitefish, and their relatives in the world. The young (called *fry*) hatch out in rivers and streams, and when they are old enough they will travel downstream and live in the ocean.

The salmon and its relatives are known as "sport fish". This isn't because they like football- but because people fish them for fun (or 'sport') as they can be very difficult to catch.

Q.7

There are a few different members of the salmon family in this case - can you find them all?

H \_ \_ p    Back    S \_ l \_ \_ \_  
 \_ r o \_ \_    T \_ o \_ t  
 R \_ \_ \_ b \_ \_    T \_ \_ \_ t  
 \_ e \_ \_ r o \_ \_

NOW MAKE YOUR WAY DOWN TO THE DISCOVERY ZONE AT THE BACK OF THE IRISH ROOM AND FIND **SMALL TORTOISESHELL BUTTERFLY** IN ONE OF THE TABLE CASES.



This is a very common butterfly which you'll find a lot in gardens. The caterpillar is small, brown and fuzzy, and is commonly known as a "Hairy Molly".

FACT

The Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly hibernates in houses over the winter, and then comes out in late spring

Q.8

What do you think the bright colours on the wings mean? (Circle your answer)

Look at me I'm pretty!

Look at me I'm scary!

Don't eat me - I don't taste nice!

GO TO THE LIFE AQUATIC CART AND FIND THE DRAWER WITH THE **MAYFLIES**

FACT

People who fish make hooks with pretend mayflies on them (there are three in the drawer). The fishing "flies" are made of feathers, hair and wire. You use different "flies" to catch different fish.

Mayflies live as young insects (called *larvae*) for years in a river or stream. As adults they grow wings and leave the water and fly over the surface instead, but sadly they only live as an adult FOR ONE DAY! They are eaten by lots of different animals- other insects, frogs and fish.

Q.9

There are lots of different insect larvae that live in the water. Look at all the other animals in the mayfly drawer. In the list below, circle the other *insect larvae* in the drawer:

- Caterpillar
- Damselfly
- Crab
- Dragonfly
- Slug
- Mosquito
- Wasp
- Ant
- Snail

Q.10

**SIGNS OF SPRING WORD SEARCH**  
 Now's your chance to spot some signs of spring for yourself! Find the different spring animals in the word search below:

R	O	B	I	N	D	N	E	N
A	A	L	P	F	J	W	H	X
B	K	U	E	I	P	G	A	M
B	S	S	K	W	Z	K	R	A
I	V	I	X	E	N	C	E	Y
T	J	L	T	L	O	Q	U	F
W	F	U	B	G	S	Y	X	L
Q	C	P	W	A	O	R	K	Y
B	U	T	T	E	R	F	L	Y
E	B	H	Z	A	T	O	J	S
E	Z	S	W	A	L	L	O	W

- BEE
- BUTTERFLY
- CUB
- EAGLE
- FRY
- HARE
- MAGPIE
- MAYFLY
- RABBIT
- ROBIN
- SWALLOW
- VIXEN



**WELL DONE!**

**YOU HAVE FINISHED OUR TRAIL "SPRING INTO ACTION!".**

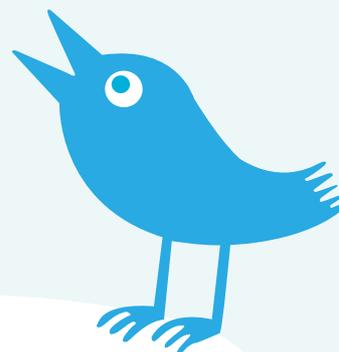


Why not spring into action yourself and record signs of spring in a nature book, or on the following websites?

At home: [www.springalive.net](http://www.springalive.net)



In school: [www.greenwave.ie](http://www.greenwave.ie)



**Answers:**

- 1) For camouflage;
- 2) It has gold coloured feathers on its back and head;
- 3) He's looking out for predators;
- 4) They had a bird for their dinner- the feathers you see are from a pheasant;
- 5) To keep predators out;
- 6) To protect the eggs/chicks;
- 7) Hump Back Salmon, Brown Trout, Rainbow Trout, Sea Trout- did you get them all? ;

- 8) Don't eat me- I don't taste nice!
- 9) You should have circled Dragonfly, Damselfly and Mosquito;
- 10)

R	O	B	I	N	D	N	E	N
A	A	L	P	F	J	W	H	X
B	K	U	E	I	P	G	A	M
B	S	S	K	W	Z	K	R	A
I	V	I	X	E	N	C	E	Y
T	J	L	T	L	O	Q	U	F
W	F	U	B	G	S	Y	X	L
Q	C	P	W	A	O	R	K	Y
B	U	T	T	E	R	F	L	Y
E	B	H	Z	A	T	O	J	S
E	Z	S	W	A	L	L	O	W



For more information on exhibitions and education programmes, contact the Education & Outreach Department of the National Museum of Ireland:

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