

THE ZOO IN MY GARDEN

Hi! My name is Daisy and I have a ZOO in my Garden! Well, not a zoo with lions and tigers, but I have lots of wild animals in my garden - how about you? It's good to have lots of animals in your garden - it's called the garden's **BIODIVERSITY**



GARDEN SNAIL - The Garden Snail is a gentle herbivore and it feeds on lots of different types of trees, vegetable crops, garden flowers, and cereals. They have also been known to feed on dead animals! The Snail has a special tongue called a *radula* - a tongue covered in teeth that it uses to cut or scrape its food from plant or rock surface. Snails are a food source for many other animals, especially Hedgehogs who are able to crunch through their shell and digest their slimy bodies.



FOX - The Fox or Red Fox is a member of the canine family, which includes dogs and wolves. They are usually thought of as being carnivores (meat eaters), but really they are opportunistic feeders, meaning they'll eat anything they like the taste of. This includes insects, slugs and snails, earthworms, blackberries, apples and other fruit, mice, rabbits, birds, eggs, frogs and fish!

My favourite animal of all is the lady-bird, as they are so colourful!



7-SPOT LADYBIRD - The 7-Spot Ladybird is one of the most common ladybirds in Ireland and Europe. It is red, with seven black spots on its back. The bright colour warns predators that they are poisonous. Most birds are unable to eat them without becoming ill. Both the adults and the larvae (pronounced lar-vay) eat aphids (greenfly).

Biological diversity or biodiversity refers to the range of all life forms (or species) on Earth - plants, animals and microorganisms (e.g. bacteria). It's not just concerned with the numbers of species, but diversity within the species and their interdependence (how they need each other to survive).



MAGPIE - The Magpie's name is made up of two words - pied (old English word which means something is black and white) and maggot (as in the creepy crawlies!). The Magpie is a member of the crow family and will eat a range of food including young birds and eggs, insects, scraps and carrion, nuts and cereals. One of their biggest enemies is the Grey Squirrel, who tries to steal the eggs from its nest.



ROBIN - The Robin is one of the only birds that stays in Ireland over the winter months. They are song birds and their song would be familiar to most people. They don't live for very long, usually only two to three years at most. The male Robin has a red breast, and is very aggressive. If a Robin hops up to you he's not being friendly - he's trying to chase you away from his territory!

Here are some of my favourite garden animals - have you ever found any of these in your favourite garden or park?



HEDGEHOG - Hedgehogs are nocturnal animals, which means they mostly are active at night. This makes sense as at night there are fewer predators about and more of the food that they like to eat (slugs, snails and earthworms!!). Hedgehogs are also covered in spines to protect them from predators - an adult hedgehog has approx. 5000 spines all over their body! This is good for protection but makes grooming impossible, and Hedgehogs suffer a lot from fleas and ticks.



GREY SQUIRREL - The Grey Squirrel is an introduced species to Ireland - one story tells us that a basket of them were brought to Ireland from England as a wedding present, but they all escaped into the wild. The Grey Squirrel is active by day and sleep at night in their nest or "drey". Grey Squirrels do not hibernate, and feed through the winter.



SMALL TORTOISESHELL BUTTERFLY - This colourful butterfly is usually seen in the late spring and summer. The adults feed on nectar from flowers, while the caterpillars (known as a "hairy molly") feed on nettles. The Small Tortoiseshell's bright wings help frighten away predators like birds. The dark backs of the wings are dull and this helps camouflage the butterfly when it's resting or hibernating.

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It is important that we protect Biodiversity as we are all connected, and depend on each other. If we didn't have any insects, for example, crops wouldn't grow and we wouldn't have bread, breakfast cereals or biscuits!!

According to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, our island is home to:



Approx 815 species of flowering plants



80 native ferns



Over 700 species of mosses and liverworts



3,500 different types of fungi



1,400 algae



27 species of freshwater fish species are found in our lakes and rivers



Over 20 land mammals



Over 1,000 species of lichens



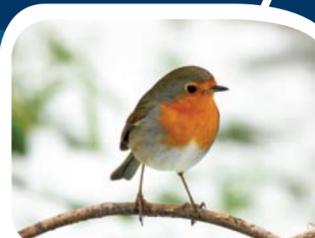
2 types of seal - the Grey seal and the Common seal



20 whale and dolphin species



10 bats species



425 bird species have been recorded



1,000's of invertebrates

I didn't know there were so many different types of living things in Ireland! Did you?



3 reptile species including visiting leatherback turtle



3 amphibians - the smooth newt, common frog and the natterjack toad

And we are ALL CONNECTED!

