

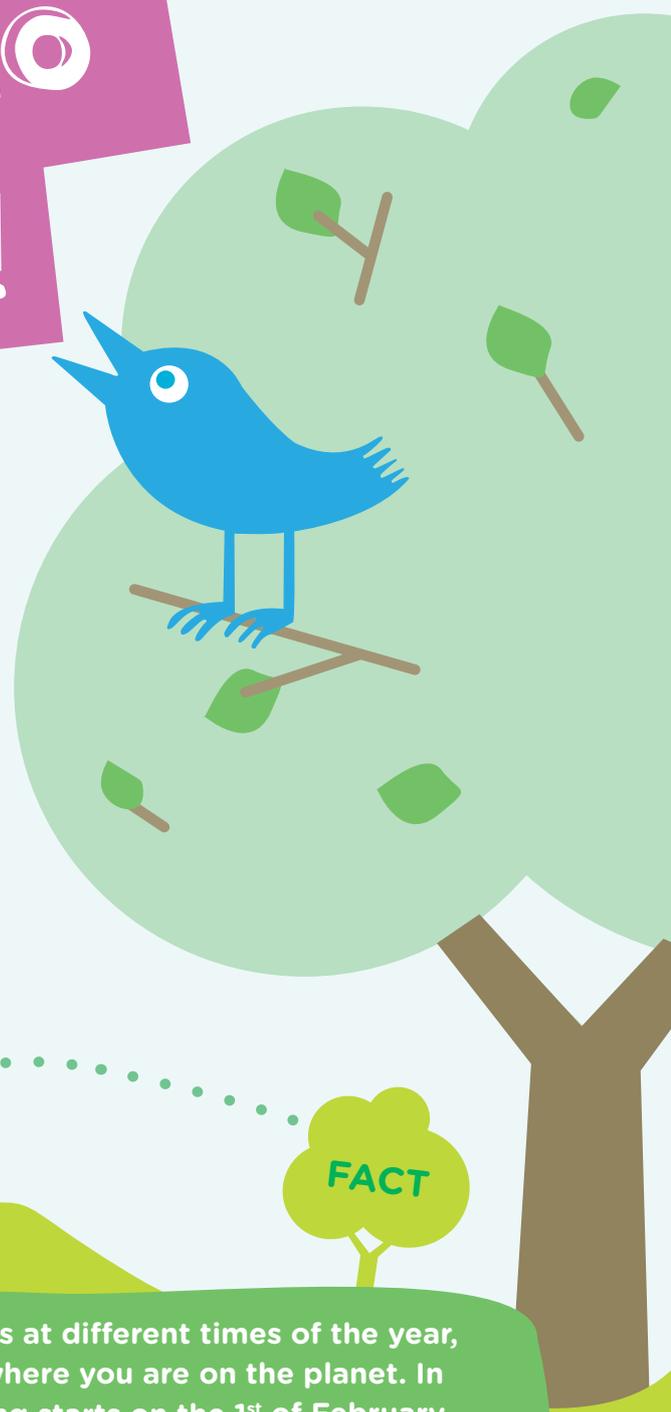
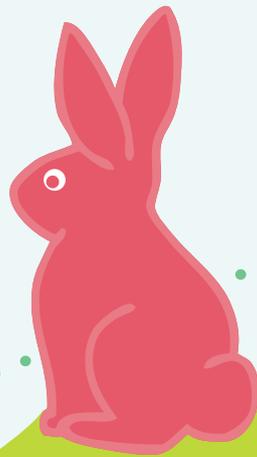


Spring into  
Action!

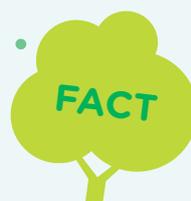


It's Spring and all of nature is busy-building nests, looking after young or finding food after the long winter's sleep.

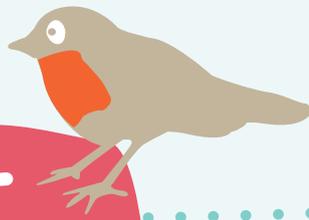
Follow this trail through the museum to find out more about the animals you'll see in action this spring.



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 ALONG THE LEFT SIDE OF THE ROOM UNTIL YOU FIND THE **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  
AND LOOK TO THE RIGHT  
UNTIL YOU FIND THE  
**HARES AND  
RABBITS**

FACT

The saying "As mad as a March hare" comes from the lively behaviour of hares during the mating season. (see photo right)



The appearance of hares and rabbits has always been associated with the arrival of spring. It's a busy time of year for them, especially as their babies have just arrived.



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



FACT

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.

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're untidy animals

They're bad at building

To keep predators out

GO UP THE CENTRE OF THE ROOM AND LOOK LEFT TO 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 WALK TO THE LEFT OF THE ROOM 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.



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

H\_\_p Back S\_l\_\_\_\_  
 \_ro\_\_ T\_o\_t  
 R\_\_b\_\_ T\_\_t  
 \_e\_ \_ro\_\_

Q.7

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.



FACT

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

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”.



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 VERY BACK  
OF THE ROOM AND FIND THE  
TABLE CASES WITH THE  
**DRAGONFLIES**

Dragonflies 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, hunting other insects. Dragonflies are eaten by lots of different animals - other insects, frogs and fish.

**FACT**

The colourful dragonflies are known for their speed and acrobatic flight, and there are at least 17 different types or species living in Ireland!

**Q.9**

There are lots of different insects that live in Ireland. Can you see another type of insect in the dragonfly case? In the list below circle which insect you find:

Caterpillar

Damselfly

Crab

Bee

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 Damselfly
- 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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E-mail: [bookings@museum.ie](mailto:bookings@museum.ie)

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