

# Seasonal Activity Trail Series - Winter

**DO NOT  
DISTURB!**

**HIBERNATION  
IN  
PROGRESS**

**Ssssssssssssssh!**

It's winter and often animals are sleeping or hibernating - it's the best way to avoid the cold weather.

Tip toe through the museum and try to find the answers on this trail, and whatever you do - **DO NOT DISTURB THE ANIMALS!**

**FACT**

Hibernation is a special deep sleep, where the animal's body temperature drops, and its heartbeat and breathing slow down. By hibernating the animal is saving its energy, so they don't have to go out in the cold to look for food.

**museum**

National Museum of Ireland  
Ard-Mhúsaem na hÉireann

Natural History

# START

## AT THE HEDGEHOGS AND SQUIRRELS

(past the eagles and owls on the left-hand side)

Q. 1

How many squirrels are in the case?

A: \_\_\_\_\_

Squirrels are not true hibernators- they store food in the Autumn and then will wake up during the winter to eat it. Squirrels don't want other animals stealing their food while they sleep, so they hide it carefully.



Grey Squirrels hide their food in many places, so if another squirrel or animal were to find it, the entire year's supply would not be lost. This is called "scatter hoarding".

FACT

There are two types of hibernation- true hibernation, or temporary hibernation (called torpor). The difference is that if you are a true hibernator, you never wake up over the winter. Animals that spend the winter in torpor will wake up every now and again for food, or if there's a warm spell of weather.

The Red Squirrel has another way of hiding its food - it will dig a shallow pit called a midden, place its food there and then cover it with leaves and twigs to hide it. This is known as "larder hoarding".

Q. 2

If you were a squirrel and hiding food, which type of hoarding would you choose? (Circle your answer)

Scatter Hoarding      Larder Hoarding

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Have a look at the Hedgehogs at the bottom of the case. When Hedgehogs wake up to feed in the winter they have to go out and hunt for snails, slugs and other insects. You can help by leaving out cat or dog food for hedgehogs, but you should never feed them bread or milk, as they can't digest it and if they eat it they might die.

Q. 3

One hedgehog is rolled up in a ball - why do you think that's so? (Circle your answer)

To keep it warm & protect itself

To touch its toes

To stop other hedgehogs tickling it

Now make your way down to the Discovery Zone at the back of the Irish room and find the case with the **Garden Snails** in it.

The Garden Snail's scientific name is *Helix aspersa*.



Did you know the Snails in your garden hibernate? They usually group together under a stone or in a tree hollow and sleep during the cold days of winter.

Q. 4

Can you find the snails hibernating in this case? How many are huddled together?

A: \_\_\_\_\_



Now make your way back to the case where you saw the hedgehogs, and find the frogs and toads hiding on the right side of this case. Frogs and toads escape the cold winter by sleeping in the warm mud at the bottom of ponds.



Q. 5

What type of toad is on display here? (Circle your answer)

Common Toad    Green Toad  
Rare Toad    Natterjack Toad



FACT

The Arctic and Antarctica are known as Polar Regions as they surround the North and South Poles.

Now look at the deer antlers at the top of the walls all around the room. Find a pair of **Reindeer** antlers (they are labelled!)

Reindeer don't hibernate as they are well adapted for their cold habitat in the Arctic. Their coat is made up of hollow hairs which help trap heat close to the body. It also makes them more buoyant- handy when you need to cross a river to get to your grazing ground! Did you know that Reindeer used to live here in Ireland during the Ice Age?"

Q. 6

Can you name another type of deer that used to live in Ireland? (hint: look at the big skeletons near the front door)

A: \_\_\_\_\_

Now, make your way to the **Snowy Owl**.  
This is in the same case as the large eagle,  
to the left of the deer skeletons.



Male snowy owls are almost completely white, while females are white with dark bars on otherwise white plumage. This owl is a female

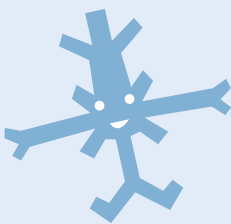
**FACT**

Snowy owls live in the Polar regions, but sometimes travel south and are found in Ireland. To keep warm in cold temperatures, snowy owls have a lot of feathers. This makes them one of the heaviest owl species in Europe.

**Q. 7**

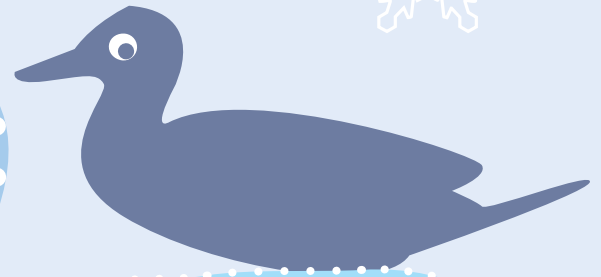
Have a look at the Snowy Owl - how do you think they keep their feet warm in the cold arctic winter?

**A:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





Now walk down the centre of the room and find the large case with lots of ducks and geese in it. Find the two **Pintail Ducks** in it.



**FACT**

The Pintail Duck gets its name from its long narrow tail feather, which looks like a pin.

Some birds come to Ireland in winter as it's warmer than where they live. Pintail Ducks spend the summer in Iceland and the Arctic, then their winters in Ireland. They don't mind the Irish winter weather, but they find the winters in the Arctic much too cold to stay there.

**Q. 8**

Have a look at the male (♂) and female (♀). Why are their feathers so different? (Circle your answer)

- So birdwatchers can tell them apart
- So the female is camouflaged when she's on her nest
- So the ducklings know which one is their mummy



Next turn around and find the case of white winter animals, right behind you.

**Q. 9**



What is the name of the white bird in this case?

\_\_\_\_\_

Animals living in areas that become snow-covered in winter, such as mountains, can often change their colour and become white. They do this to "camouflage" or blend in with the snow.



**Q. 10**

Now look for the other two types of animals sharing this white winter display case (hint: one is hiding behind a log!)

How long does it take for the stoat to colour change? (hint: the answer is on the information label inside the case)

**A:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**WELL DONE!**  
YOU HAVE FINISHED OUR  
WINTER TRAIL "DO NOT DISTURB!"

Remember to survive the cold winter you have to:

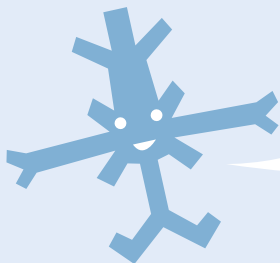
Wrap up warm - like a Reindeer


**OR**

Migrate to a warmer country- like the Pintail Duck

**OR**

Sleep lots- like Squirrels, Hedgehogs, Frogs and Snails!!





After your visit to the museum, why not draw a picture of your favourite Polar or hibernating animal?



**Answers:**

**1)** 4 squirrels- a Grey, two Red and a young (juvenile) Red; **2)** If you're a scatter hoarder then your stores are safer, but if you're a larder hoarder then you only have to remember one location for your store- the decision is up to you! **3)** A. To keep it warm & protect itself; **4)** 3 Garden snails are huddled together; **5)** Natterjack Toad; **6)** Giant Irish Deer; **7)** They have feathery feet; **8)** B. So the female is camouflaged when she's on the nest; **9)** Willow Grouse; **10)** Three days.

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

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