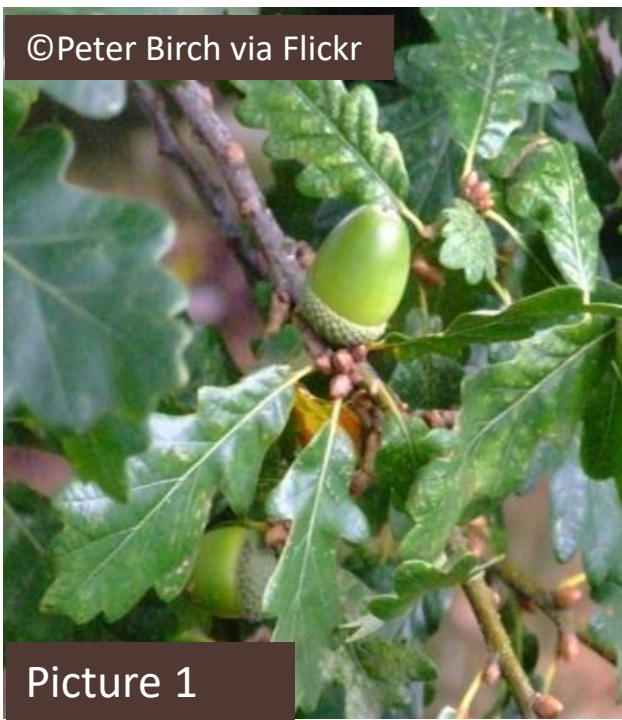




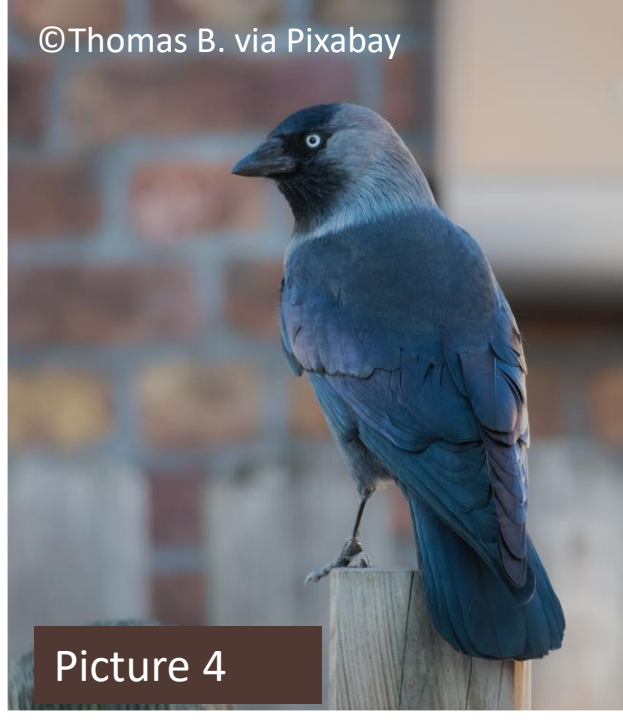
Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3



Picture 4



Picture 5



Picture 6

Can you name these Irish Plants and Animals? Try our interactive quiz on these species [here](#)

- Picture 1
- Picture 2
- Picture 3
- Picture 4
- Picture 5
- Picture 6

The logo for Green-Schools, featuring a stylized green tree with leaves above an open book. Below the book, the text "Green-Schools" is written in green, and "An Taisce" is written in black.

Sessile Oak

Common Name: (Sessile) Oak Tree

Irish Name: Dair ghaelach

Scientific Name: *Quercus petraea*



Description

The traditional Irish oak species is The Sessile Oak; one of two native Oaks. There are three key ways to recognise the Sessile Oak: 1) it has acorns on short or no stalks, 2) the leaf outline is only lightly grooved, and 3) leaves are borne on long stalks. In contrast the other one, the Pedunculate Oak, has acorns which grow on long stalks and has deeply grooved leaves on very short stalks.

Habitat found

There are small remnant Oak woods in most counties. Sessile Oak is found more commonly on poor acid soils, in hilly regions. It is the main species to be found in Ireland's most familiar woodlands, e.g. Killarney. Native Oaks are an important habitat for hundreds of insects and many birds and mammals. Oak trees can grow to 40m tall, and can live for over 1,000 years!



Image by Peter Birch via Flickr.com

Flower: May

Fruit: October

Oak trees are deciduous - this means they drop their leaves in Autumn and Winter. This allows them time to rest during a period when there is very little energy available from the sun.

Oak trees start to grow new shoots and leaves in Spring when they get energy from the extra sunlight at this time of year

Life Cycle

Acorns will form in the summer. These will grow big and fat and eventually fall off the tree naturally by the end of Autumn, if not taken by an animal before then.

Tiny flowers grow in late Spring; male flowers appear as dangling catkins; female flowers occur in stiff reddish stalk-less clusters. Each tree will have both male and female flowers.

The male flowers spread their pollen using the wind - when a female flower receives pollen it can then produce seeds. Oak tree seeds are called 'Acorns'.



Image by Peter Birch via Flickr.com

Fun Facts!

One in every five town-land names in Ireland refers to a tree! And more than 10% of these have some link to the word 'dair', the Irish word for oak. Eg. Cill Dara, the Irish for Kildare means 'Church of the Oak'. Can you think of any others?

Did you know?

Oak Trees also rely on animals such as Squirrels and Jackdaws to spread acorns far away from the parent tree. Animals do this accidentally! For example when a squirrel has eaten its fill, it will then collect extra acorns, and bury them in the ground for later or for fear that food will be scarce in the winter. If the winter is mild, or the animal is forgetful, and can't remember the storage place, the acorns get left in the ground. They then become new Oak Trees in Spring!



Sessile Oak

Draw acorns on the trees in Autumn.
Can you see any animals trying to eat them?

In **Winter** Acorns will fall to the ground, or be carried away from the tree by hungry animals such as squirrels or jackdaws

In **Spring** Oak trees grow their branches a little longer. Acorns from last year will also sprout and turn into new trees.

Life Cycle

By **Autumn** the mammy flowers, which have got pollen from the daddy flowers, will turn into chunky seeds called Acorns.

In early **Summer** the trees make mammy flowers and daddy flowers. Pollen is carried on the wind from daddy flowers and can land on mammy flowers on other Oaks far away.

Draw Sessile Oak leaves:

Holly

Common Name: Holly

Irish Name: Cuileann

Scientific Name: *Ilex aquifolium*

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Description

This is a well-known small tree. The evergreen, glossy leaves are spikey and stiff; the upper side is darker green than the lower side. It has small white flowers (6-10mm) from May to July. By August these have turned into green berries (just on the female trees). This is followed in late autumn by the familiar bright scarlet berries.

Habitat found

This small native tree is widespread in woodlands and hedgerows throughout Ireland. It forms the shrub layer in some of our oldest woodlands. The Holly leaves are a main food-plant (along with Ivy) of the Holly Blue Butterfly's caterpillars. The berries are a great source of food for many birds (e.g. The Song Thrush and Mistle Thrush) during winter.



Image by Kentish Plover via Flickr.com

By **Winter** these berries have turned bright red; and have the typical appearance of the common festive decorations in Ireland. Many seeds (located in the berries) are spread by birds!



Holly is an **evergreen tree**, and so has **green leaves all year round**.



In **Spring**, with the increasing temperatures and sunlight, the plant grows new shoots.



Small white flowers blossom in **Summer** from May through to July.



Fertilisation happens when a flower on a female tree receives the pollen from a flower on a male tree. A fertilised flower will then turn into a berry.



In **Autumn** green berries can be seen on the trees.



Life Cycle



Image by Hornbeam Arts via Flickr.com

Fun Facts!

- Holly trees are either male or female! - only the female can bear berries, but both sexes bear flowers. It is therefore important to plant several Holly trees together to make sure that the female trees can be fertilised by the male pollen, and thus go on to produce fruit.
- In European folklore, Holly trees were associated with protection from lightning, so people used to plant them near to their homes!

Flower: May – July

Fruit: November – January



Holly

Draw Holly leaves:

Draw Holly in the Winter:

These berries turn bright red in **Winter**, before they fall to the ground, with little seeds inside.

In **Spring** Holly trees grow their branches a little longer. Seeds from the winter berries will also turn into new Holly trees.

Life Cycle

By **Autumn** the flowers, which have been pollinated by insects, will have turned into round green berries.

In **Summer** small white flowers grow on the plants. They will attract insect visitors such as the Holly Blue Butterfly.

Pied Wagtail



Common Name: Pied Wagtail / Willy Wagtail

Irish Name: Glasóg shráide

Scientific Name: *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Description

A small, black and white, long-tailed, active bird. It is often seen standing whilst busily wagging its tail up and down. It dashes about over grassland, lawns and car parks in search of food. It often calls out during its somewhat bobbing flight.

Habitat found

The Pied Wagtail lives in a wide variety of habitats, often close to water, and including urban areas in Ireland. It is not common in upland areas or bogs. They feed mainly on insects caught on the ground or in flight. These birds often visit school yards and car-parks!

In Autumn and Winter, females and first-winter males feed together in flocks. Adult males establish feeding territories on their own.

In Spring, birds find a suitable mate and nest site and will start to build their nest. They like tree hollows and log piles; but prefer to nest in holes.

Outside the breeding season, birds roost in reed beds, bushes and trees; sometimes in city centres!

Around mid-May they lay 5-6 eggs. Eggs are incubated by the female. Chicks will hatch after about 2 weeks.

Parents will look after their young for about two weeks after leaving the nest. And then they will go on to have a second family if it's not too late in the summer.

Chicks are fed mainly on flying insects, and they grow quickly. They are ready to leave the nest after about 2 weeks.

Life Cycle



©Michael John O'Mahony

Fun Facts!

During the winter, pied wagtails form large groups at night to keep warm and safe. In the UK these roosts have had as many as 4000 birds huddled together! That must be one noisy sleep-over!



©Michael John O'Mahony

Seen in Ireland: All year round.
Common throughout Ireland.

Pied Wagtail



Draw a Pied Wagtail:

In the **Autumn** and **Winter**, adult males often feed alone, but all the other birds are happy to feed in small groups together. They also sleep in large groups at night-time; sometimes in trees in the city centre!

In **Spring** the mammy and daddy birds pick a good spot to build a nest; usually a tree hollow.

Is there anywhere in your school where you think Pied Wagtails might like to build a nest? Draw a picture of that place:

Life Cycle

By late **Summer** the chicks will fly out of the nest. The parents will stay with them and help them get food for a few more weeks.

In early **Summer** the mammy lays up to 8 eggs. They will hatch after 2 weeks. Both parents then feed the chicks insects.

Jackdaw

Common Name: Jackdaw

Irish Name: Cág

Scientific Name: *Corvus monedula*



Description

This is a relatively small crow species. It is dark grey or black all over with a hint of silver on the back of the neck. It has black legs and blue eyes. Jackdaws are usually seen in pairs; even within larger flocks you can notice birds staying close to their partner. They are very social and noisy birds; spending a lot of time calling to each other.

Habitat found

Jackdaws can be found almost anywhere in Ireland; living happily in towns or in wild places. They feed in open areas such as pastures, parks, on the tide line at the beach and in school yards. They are omnivores, meaning they eat lots of different foods. This includes insects, seeds, fruit, scraps and birds eggs. They also eat acorns when they are ripe.

In winter Jackdaws can join really large flocks; usually with a mix of crows, including Rooks. These flocks can number tens of thousands of birds!

In Spring young Jackdaws in their first year will find a partner for life. All pairs will start to establish a territory and find good nest sites at this time.

Young birds will stay feeding with their parents for a number of weeks, before joining bigger flocks and feeding independently.

Both the male and female help to build a nest. The nest site can be in a coastal cliff, old house, shed, chimney, or in tree holes in woodlands, parks and gardens.

Life Cycle

After one month in the nest, being fed by both parents, the chicks are big and strong enough to take flight.

4-5 eggs are laid in the nest, usually around the start of April. The female will incubate the eggs for about 20 days.

Fun Facts!

The central cup of the Jackdaw's nest is usually lined with hair, grass or fur. Jackdaws have been known to perch on the back of horses and sheep to pull out hairs in order to line their nest. Ouch!



Image by Maxwell Hamilton via Flickr.com



Image by Jez via Flickr.com

Seen in Ireland: Year-round

In Autumn and Winter, Jackdaws often join up with Rooks and Hooded Crows to feed and roost together in very large numbers.



Jackdaw

Draw a Jackdaw:

In **Winter** Jackdaws can join really large flocks sometimes with more than 10,000 birds!!

In **Spring** the mammy and daddy birds pick a good spot to build a nest; this can be a shed, an old house, or in a sea cliff. The mammy lays about 4 eggs.

By Autumn the young birds do not need any more help from their parents and they will join big flocks with other young Jackdaws.

In early **Summer** the eggs will hatch out. Both parents then feed the chicks with insects and other food until they are strong enough to fly.

Life Cycle

Is there anywhere in your school where you think Jackdaws might like to build a nest? Draw a picture of that place:

Hedgehog

Common Name: Hedgehog

Irish Name: Gráinneóg

Scientific Name: *Erinaceus europaeus*

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Description

The hedgehog is a medium sized mammal (i.e. an animal with hair, that gives birth to live young, and produces its own milk). It is easily recognisable because of its very spiny fur. They are nocturnal animals, which means they are active by night, and rest during the day.

Habitat found

In Ireland the hedgehog is associated with Hedgerows and Pasture Farmland. Mainly they eat insects, including moth larvae, earwigs, beetles, harvestman and caterpillars, and will also devour spiders, slugs and earthworms if they find them.



Foraging is a time consuming nightly activity, for both sexes of hedgehog during the autumn period. It will go into hibernation around October.

Hedgehogs come out of hibernation around March each year, once the weather begins to get mild.

After a month, the young will leave the nest, accompanied by their mother and learn to forage for two weeks. By the age of 6 weeks old they are ready to live alone!

Most hedgehogs breed between April and July. Males will travel far and wide to find a partner. Females tend to stay in their own area and await the arrival of a wandering male.

Females take care of the family alone. Most will give birth to 3-6 babies around June. After birth the young remain in the nest with their mother, who feeds them milk, for about 4 weeks.

The female makes a cosy nest; they are not too fussy. They have been known to use: abandoned rabbit holes, dense hedges and old hay bales!

Life Cycle



DO NOT TOUCH
Hedgehogs are obviously very prickly. Their spines would hurt you if you try to pick them up! Ouch! But also they are very often covered in fleas!



Seen in Ireland: Spring to Autumn

Present in Ireland: Year-round
(but usually not seen during their hibernation period over winter)

Fun Facts!

If attacked by a predator e.g. a fox or badger, the hedgehog rolls into a tight ball so that its spines stick right out. These will hurt the attacker, and probably get them to give up the chase!



Hedgehog

Draw a Hedgehog out looking for food at night-time:

All hedgehogs hunt every night until the end of Autumn, getting as fat as they can! They then make a bed, somewhere cosy, and they go to sleep for the whole **Winter**!

In **Spring** the hedgehog comes out of hibernation and starts looking for food.

In **Summer** the mammy builds a nest; somewhere dry under stones, logs or soil. The mammy and daddy then make a family.

The mammy looks after the babies all summer, feeding them with her own milk. By **Autumn** the young have learned how to hunt for food too.

Life Cycle

Holly Blue Butterfly

Common Name: Holly Blue

Irish Name: Gormán Cuilinn

Scientific Name: *Celastrina argiolus*



Description

The wings are mainly pale blue, 26mm-35mm across. The upper wing (when wings are open) has a black border, which is more pronounced in females. The underside of the wing (visible when wings are closed) are even paler blue, almost silvery, with small black dots and streaks.

Habitat found

Found in gardens containing Holly and Ivy, and also close to where remnants of old woodland retain Holly and Ivy plants.

Flight period:

April – May
across all of Ireland, and;

July – August in areas where the butterfly has a second brood (which is only in the south of Ireland, where weather is milder).



These butterflies do not survive on the wing over winter, as there is no food for them.

New Holly Blue butterflies emerge from cocoons in March and April

These adults feed mainly on the nectar from flowers of Holly. They mate, and females will lay eggs singly, beside unopened flower buds.



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Life Cycle

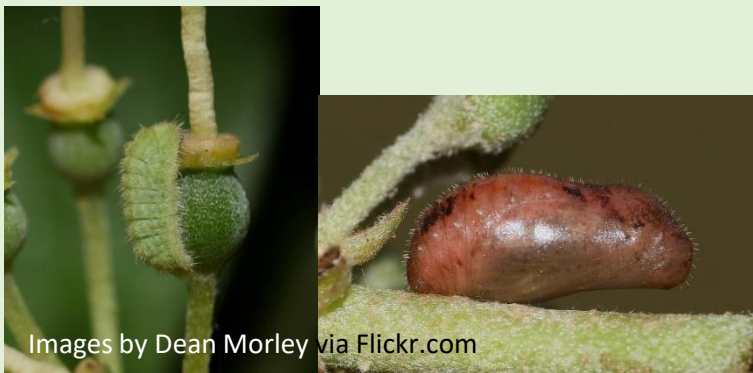
Most caterpillars* will build a cocoon and lie dormant for six months or more, as they over-winter in the chrysalis phase of the life-cycle.

After nearly 4 weeks of feeding on the developing flowers and fruits of Holly the caterpillars turn a dull purple colour and prepare to pupate

Eggs hatch after about 2 weeks; the caterpillars are generally a pale green colour.

*Fun Facts!

Holly Blue Butterflies that live in the southern half of the island of Ireland can double-brood! This means that the first caterpillars born in early Summer, turn into butterflies within a few weeks; they get out flying in July or early August. These butterflies then mate and lay eggs, which grow into caterpillars by the end of the Summer. This second batch of caterpillars only feed on Ivy (as Holly flowers are no longer available). This brood of caterpillars will over-winter in cocoons.



Images by Dean Morley via Flickr.com

Holly Blue Butterfly



Draw Holly Blue caterpillars eating on the Holly Tree:

In early **Autumn** the caterpillars turn purple and start to make a cocoon. When finished the caterpillars fall asleep inside for the whole **Winter**.

By **late Summer** small light-green caterpillars come out of the eggs and eat the flowers and fruits of Holly.

By **Spring** the caterpillar has turned into a butterfly! When it wakes up it comes out of the cocoon and starts looking for food.

Draw a Holly Blue Butterfly feeding on the small white Holly flowers on the Holly tree:

In **early Summer** the butterfly feeds on the nectar from flowers. The mummies lay their eggs on the Holly plant.

Life Cycle