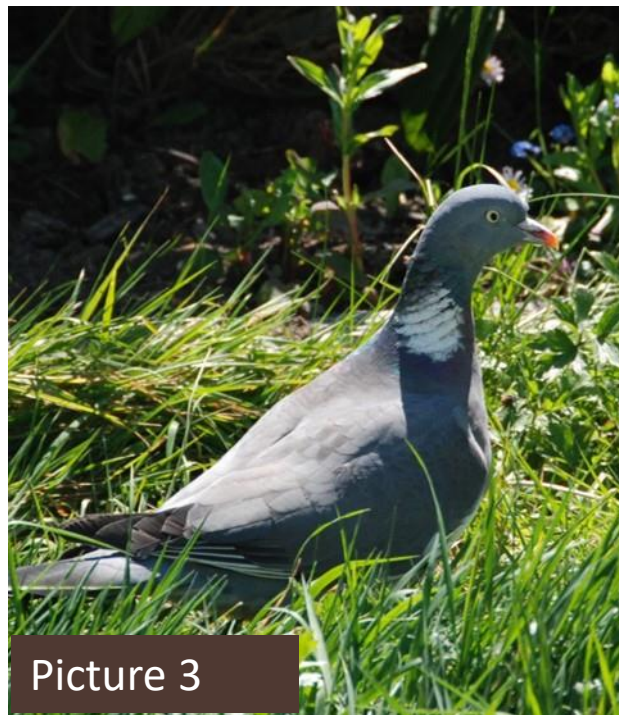




Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3



Picture 4



Picture 5



Picture 6

©Mark Chambers via Flickr

©Hanna Knutsson via Flickr

© Michael John O'Mahony

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

• Picture 1

• Picture 2

• Picture 3

• Picture 4

• Picture 5

• Picture 6

Red Clover



Common Name: Red Clover

Irish Name: Seamair dhearg

Scientific Name: *Trifolium pratense*

Description

Red Clover is a native plant which is found growing all over Ireland. This plant has a very strong and deep root system. It grows in an upright position and its stems are hairy. Its leaves are divided into three green leaflets, each with a white v-shape. Its dome-shaped flower-head is made up of many small flowers that can range in colour from pink, red or purple. After the flower heads disperse their seeds they become brown and paper like.

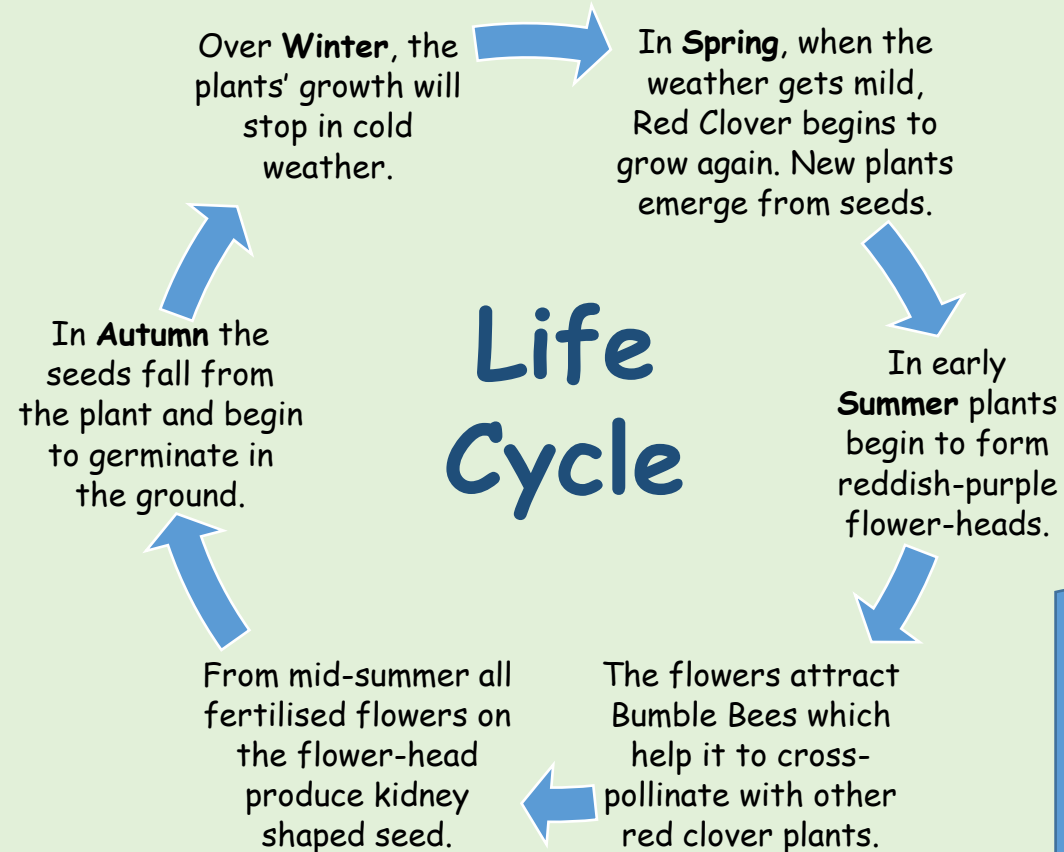
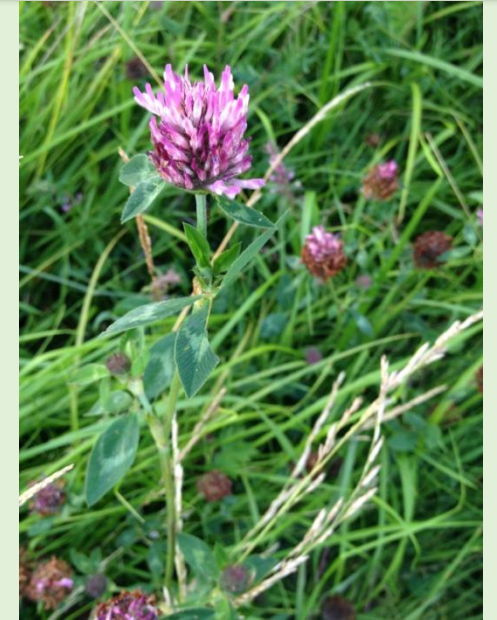
Habitat found

Red Clover can be found growing in numerous habitats including cultivated grass-lands such as, gardens and parks. It is often sown as a supplement for silage and grazing in agricultural fields. It also grows wild in wastelands and grassy verges along roadsides. It prefers well drained and slightly acidic ground, however, it will grow in most places unless very wet.



Flower: May – October

Fruit: July– November



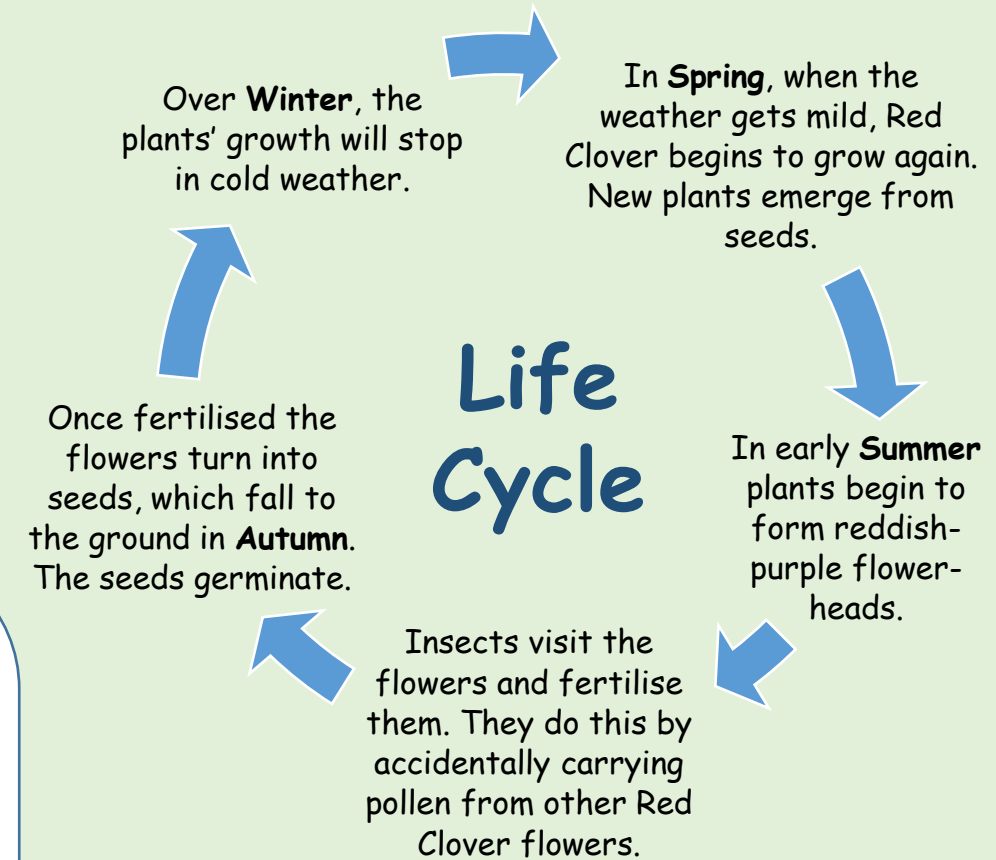
Fun Facts!

- This plant is a very important source of nectar and pollen for bumble bees.
- Red Clover is a perennial plant, meaning it can live for several years.
- Red clover is part of the bean family, Fabaceae.
- The flowers can be used to make herbal tea.

Red Clover



Draw a BumbleBee visiting a Red Clover flower-head:



Draw Red Clover leaves:

Hawthorn

Common Name: Hawthorn/Whitethorn

Irish Name: Sceach gheal

Scientific Name: *Crataegus monogyna*



Description

Hawthorn leaves have toothed lobes and can grow up to 6cm long. The tree itself can reach a height of up to 18m. The branches are dense, twisted and very thorny. Small white scented flowers begin to appear in May and grow in clusters all over the tree. These flowers then turn to fruits called 'Haws' in July which ripen to a rich red colour in autumn. The Hawthorn tree is deciduous, meaning it loses its leaves in winter and they grow back in spring.

Habitat found

Hawthorns are found all over Ireland and grow on all types of land. They are common in hedgerows, but can also be seen growing in fields by themselves. The tree can support up to 300 species, including bees, moths, small mammals, and birds which feed on its haws and nest in its dense branches. This tree also acts a good source of protection and cover for other young trees such as oak.

Flower: May – June

Fruit: July– November



© Steven Lilley via www.Flickr.com



© Sue Langford via www.Flickr.com



© _foxg via www.Flickr.com

In **Winter**, the Hawthorn bushes and trees try to save energy. They lose their leaves and stop growing altogether when the weather is cold.

In **Spring**, the Hawthorn tree begins to grow again and produce new leaves.

In early **Summer** (May) small clusters of white, and sometimes pinky flowers appear. The flowers produce nectar which attracts insects.

The visiting insects accidentally transfer pollen between different Hawthorn trees' flowers as they feed on the nectar.

Such pollinated flowers can now turn into fruit, called 'haws'. Each fruit contains one seed.

The seeds are spread to new locations by the animals who eat them (pooping!). Seeds will germinate in the soil in **Autumn**.

Life Cycle



Fun Facts!

- In Irish folklore, having a Hawthorn tree on your land is seen as good luck.
- Fairies are said to be found where Hawthorn, Oak and Ash trees grow together.
- Hawthorn trees can live up to 700 years.



Hawthorn

In **Winter**, the trees save energy by losing their leaves and stopping growth altogether when the weather is cold.



In **Spring**, the Hawthorn tree begins to grow again and produce new leaves.



In early **Summer** (May) small clusters of flowers appear. Insects visit these to feed on nectar.



Insects transfer pollen between different Hawthorn flowers, and 'pollinate' them. Then berries called 'haws' are able to grow. The haws are tasty and contain seeds.



Seeds are spread to new locations by the animals who eat them. Seeds will germinate in the soil in **Autumn**.



Life Cycle

Draw a Hawthorn leaf:

Draw an animal (e.g. A Woodmouse or Woodpigeon) eating Haw berries:

Draw Hawthorn flowers:

Woodpigeon

Common Name: Woodpigeon

Irish Name: Colm coille

Scientific Name: *Columba palumbus*



Description

The Woodpigeon is the largest of the pigeons in Ireland. It is mostly grey in colour, and has a relatively long tail and small head. Overall it is a rather stocky looking bird. It has white and green patches on the neck. When in flight, large white wing bands across the upper wing are visible. In the breeding season the males can be seen in upward-soaring display flights which end with a loud wing-clap.

Habitat found

It was originally a woodland bird, but it is very adaptable, so now is found in parks, gardens, and even in town centres too. It feeds on seeds, leaves, fruit including Ivy berries in particular, but also Haws, as well as buds and root crops.



In **Winter** birds can join really large flocks, up to a thousand birds, where there is good feeding grounds

In **Spring** Woodpigeons find a mate and build a nest; this is usually a messy platform of sticks in a tree. Both birds help to build it.

By **Autumn** young birds will have dispersed and will feed independently of their parents.

2 eggs are laid in the nest, usually around the end of April. Both the male and female help incubate the eggs for about 17 days.

In the **Summer** after 33-34 days of being fed by both parents, chicks have their flight feathers and are strong enough to take flight.

Adult pigeons produce a "milk" in their crop lining. They mix this with regurgitated food for an extra nutritious meal for their babies.

Life Cycle



Fun Facts!

Some vegetable farmers are not big fans of Woodpigeons, as the birds can cause a lot of crop damage; they love to eat cabbages, sprouts, peas and grain!

Seen in Ireland: Year-round

There is a resident population of Irish Woodpigeons who live in Ireland year-round. This population is supplemented by birds who migrate to Ireland from mainland Europe when the weather gets cold there. As a result very large flocks of can be seen here in the Winter-time.



Woodpigeon

Draw a Woodpigeon:

In **Winter** Woodpigeons can join really large flocks to feed in places with lots of food. Some flocks will have more than 1,000 birds!

In **Spring** a male and female bird pick a good spot to build a nest; this is usually a tree. The mammy lays just 1 or 2 eggs.

By **Autumn** the young birds do not need any more help from their parents and they will feed on their own.

In early **Summer** the eggs will hatch out. Both parents then feed the chicks mainly by regurgitating food, until the young are strong enough to fly.

Life Cycle

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

Barn Owl

Common Name: Barn Owl

Irish Name: Scréachóg reilige

Scientific Name: *Tyto alba*



Description

This stunning bird is not often seen as it is most active at dusk. It has a very distinctive appearance; a white heart-shaped face, light brown back and wings, and pure white under-parts. It is 37–39 cm long, and has a wingspan of 84–93 cm

Habitat found

It hunts in rough grasslands, grassy margins (e.g. at field edges or roadsides), at edges to woods and around rivers and wetlands. Nests are usually found in derelict buildings, and sometimes in holes of large old trees.

In **Winter** the young birds will disperse, and find their own areas and territories to hunt and roost. The parents may remain at the nest site to roost over the winter.

In **Spring** Barn Owls find a suitable partner and nest site. The male will bring prey to the female at the nest, as she prepares to lay eggs. She will eventually stop all hunting.

By early **Autumn** the chicks' flight feathers are fully developed and the young birds are ready to fly.

For another month both parents hunt for food for the whole family. By late Summer the chicks are getting very big and noisy

The female stays with the chicks for about 3 weeks, to keep them warm, and to tear up the meat that the male brings home.

By early **Summer** 4-6 round white eggs are laid. The female incubates them for ~31 days. The male continues to deliver food to the nest.

Life Cycle

Seen in Ireland: Year-round
Population: ~400–500 pairs

Status: In Ireland the numbers appear to have declined by over 50% in the past 25 years. Habitat loss, Rat poisons*, and an increase in major road networks are believed to be responsible for declines.

***Possible Action:** Find out your school's policy on rodenticide-use. If it is in use, could you investigate alternative options?

Fun Facts!

- For about two days before hatching, the young will start to 'twitter' from inside the egg!
- Barn Owls mainly eat small mammals such as mice, voles, shrews and rats. They also eat birds and frogs occasionally.



© Mark Chambers via www.Flickr.com

Barn Owl



In **Winter** the young birds will leave home, and find their own areas to hunt and roost.

In **Spring** Barn Owls find a partner and chose a good site to build a nest.

By early **Summer** the female lays eggs, and she incubates them for a whole month. The male hunts for food and delivers it to her at the nest.

The female stays in the nest with the new chicks for about 3 weeks, to keep them warm. After that both parents hunt for food for the chicks for another month.

Life Cycle

By early **Autumn** the chicks' flight feathers are fully grown and the young birds learn to fly.

Draw and label a picture of a habitat you think a Barn Owl would like to hunt in:

Can you draw a Barn Owl's face?

Wood Mouse

Common Name: Wood Mouse

Irish Name: Luch féir

Scientific Name: *Apodemus sylvaticus*



Description

This mouse has brown, slightly golden fur covering its back, and it has a white underbelly (whereas the only other mouse in Ireland, the House Mouse, is a more greyish-brown all over, in comparison). The Wood Mouse can also be told apart from other small rodents by its large eyes and ears, long hind-feet and a long, slender tail. Adults generally weigh between 17–27g and can be up to 10 cm in length excluding the tail; the tail is roughly the same length again.

Habitat found

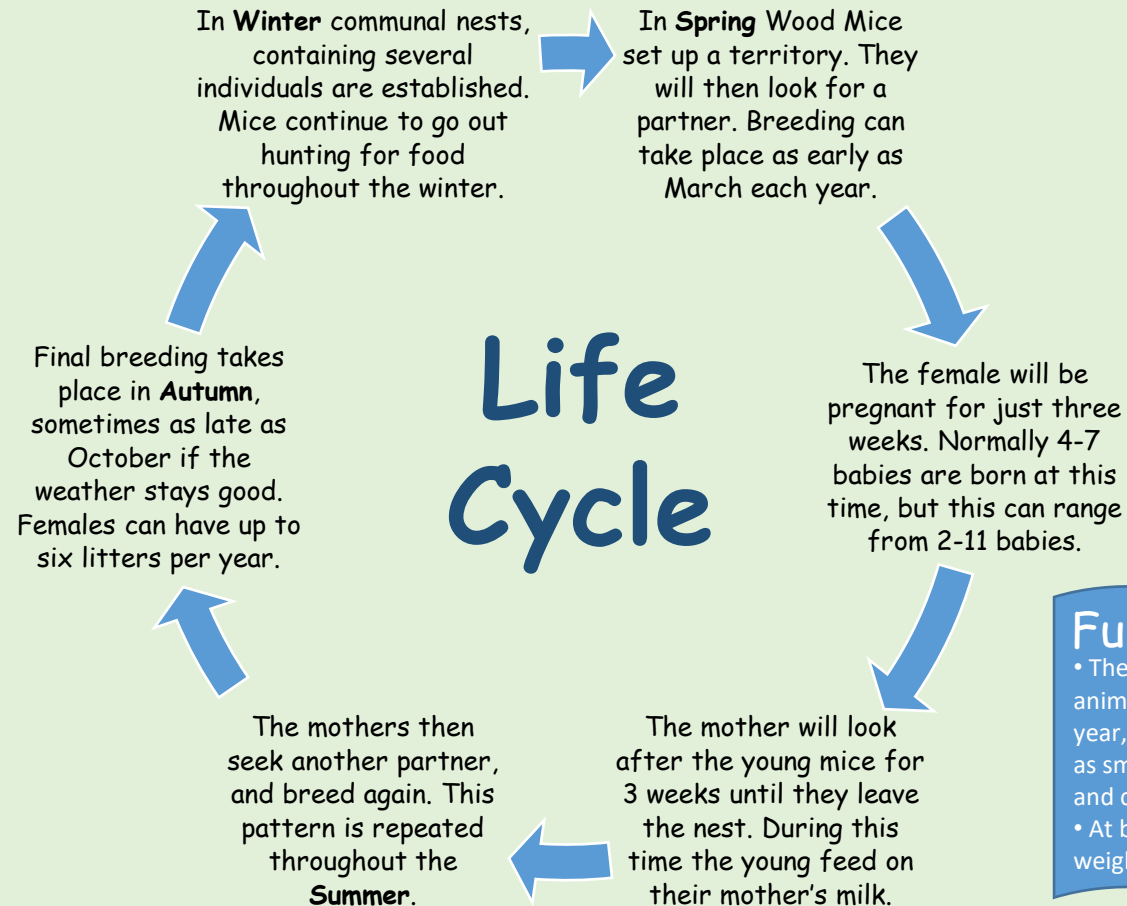
It is a highly adaptable species and is found in most habitats. As its name suggests, it is a woodland species but it is also common in hedgerows, farmland, grasslands and can be present in lower numbers on peat-lands. It prefers habitats rich in ground cover. Unlike the House Mouse, it is not common in urban areas. The species is nocturnal and spends most of the day in a burrow.



Seen in Ireland: Year-round

Did you know?

Wood Mice spend a lot of time in their underground burrows. These are dug in soft ground and can contain tunnels and chambers. Some chambers act as food stores with a nest room located deeper in the earth where it is warmer.



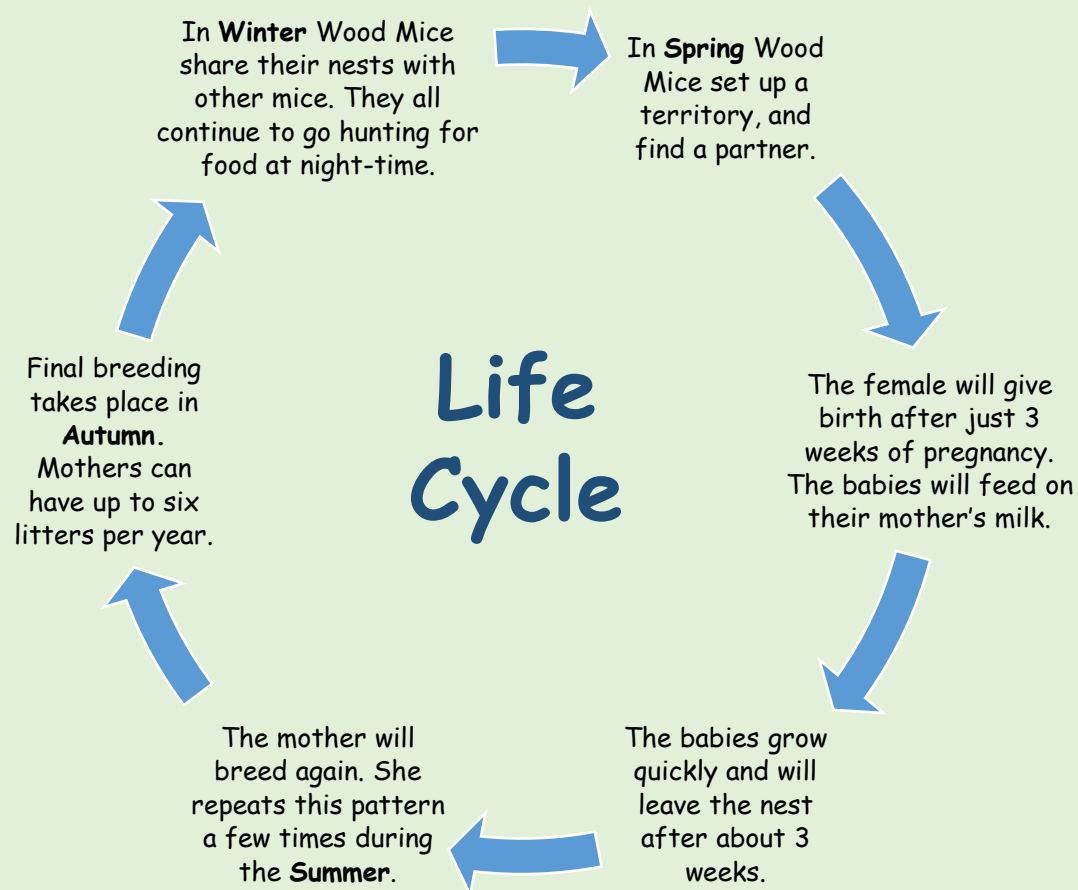
Fun Facts!

- The Wood Mouse is an opportunist and an omnivore; it eats animals and plant foods. Depending on habitat and the time of year, the diet typically includes seeds, nuts and berries as well as small invertebrates such as insect larvae, earthworms, snails and centipedes.
- At birth, baby Wood Mice weigh just 1–2g; that's half the weight of a 1 cent coin!

Wood Mouse



Draw a Wood Mouse out looking for food:



Painted Lady Butterfly

Common Name: Painted Lady

Irish Name: Áilleán

Scientific Name: *Vanessa cardui*



Description

This beautiful butterfly is mainly a dull orange with black markings on its inside wings. It has a colourful red, black and white underside. The wingspan is 65-70mm

Habitat found

Painted Lady Butterflies are found in Gardens and Woodlands in Ireland, mainly in eastern and southern coastal areas. The caterpillars' main food plant is thistles.



©Bart Souverijns via Flickr.com

Flight period: June to September.
Distribution: Found throughout Ireland.

Life Cycle

Unfortunately no stage of the lifecycle can survive the damp **Winter** weather in Ireland.

In **Summer** Painted Lady Butterflies arrive in Ireland, after migrating from southern Europe and northern Africa

Eggs are laid singly on the upper surfaces of the food plants; mainly thistles, in June.

After 2 weeks a Butterfly emerges. If born early enough, this butterfly will also go on to breed, and produce eggs.

The caterpillar eats the leaf. It then moves to other leaves, continually eating for about 25 days. The caterpillar then pupates.

Eggs hatch after about 1 week. The caterpillar crawls to the underside of the leaf and spins a protective web over itself.



©Michael John O'Mahony via Flickr.com

Fun Facts!

The Painted Lady is a long-distance migrant. It causes the most spectacular butterfly migrations to be witnessed in Britain and Ireland. Each year, butterflies travel northwards from the edges of the deserts of North Africa, the Middle East, and central Asia to mainland Europe, reaching Britain and Ireland. The abundance varies year on year; weather is largely to blame.



Egg

Larva

Pupa

Images © www.en.wikipedia.org

Painted Lady Butterfly



Draw the caterpillars eating Thistle leaves:

Draw a Painted Lady Butterfly feeding on Red Clover flowers:

Caterpillars and Butterflies will survive mild **Autumn** weather, but they will all die off over the **Winter**.

In **Spring** there are no Painted Lady butterflies or caterpillars in Ireland. By early **Summer** they arrive from far away.

Life Cycle

Caterpillars then build a cocoon. Butterflies emerge after 2 weeks. If it is still the summer-time, they will mate, and lay eggs themselves.

The butterflies feed on nectar from lots of different flowers. Females then lay eggs on thistles. Caterpillars hatch after 1 week, and feed on thistle leaves.

Draw a Painted Lady Butterfly coming out of its brown cocoon: