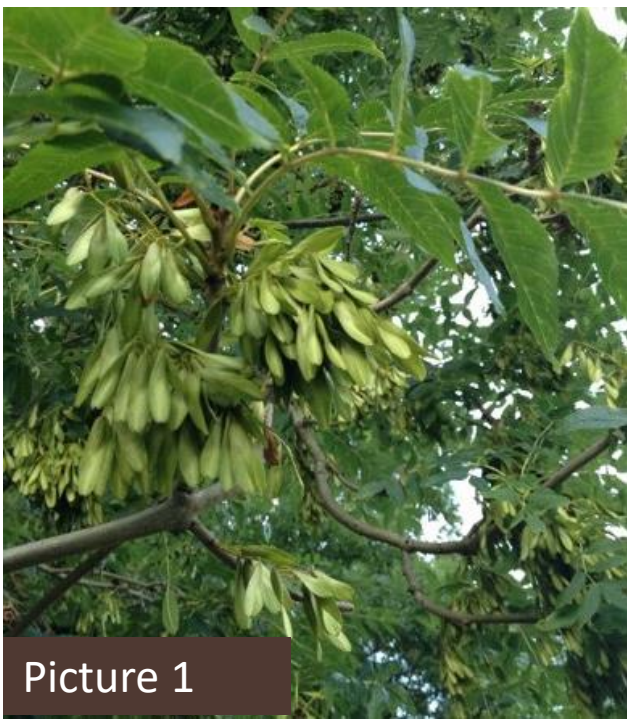
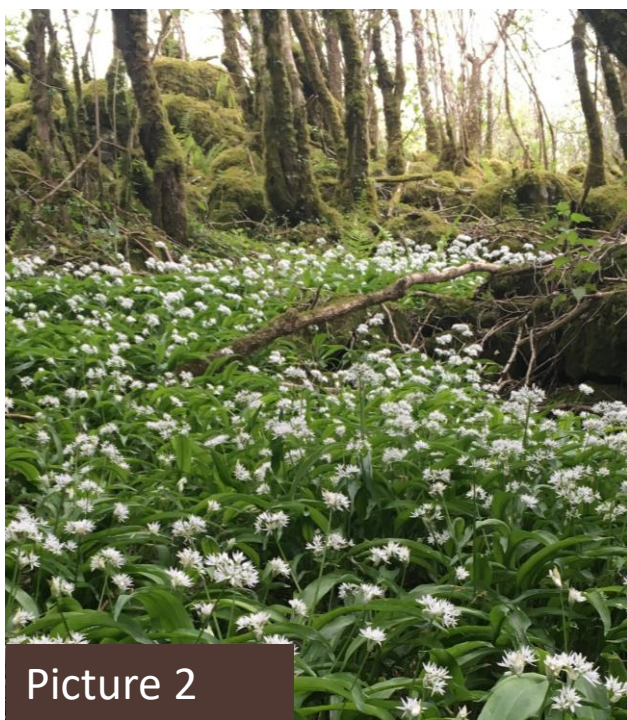




Picture 1



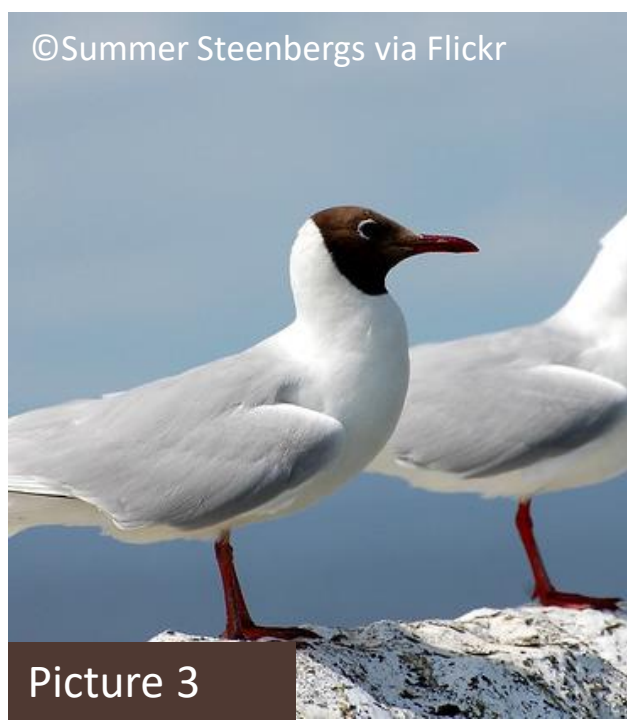
Picture 5



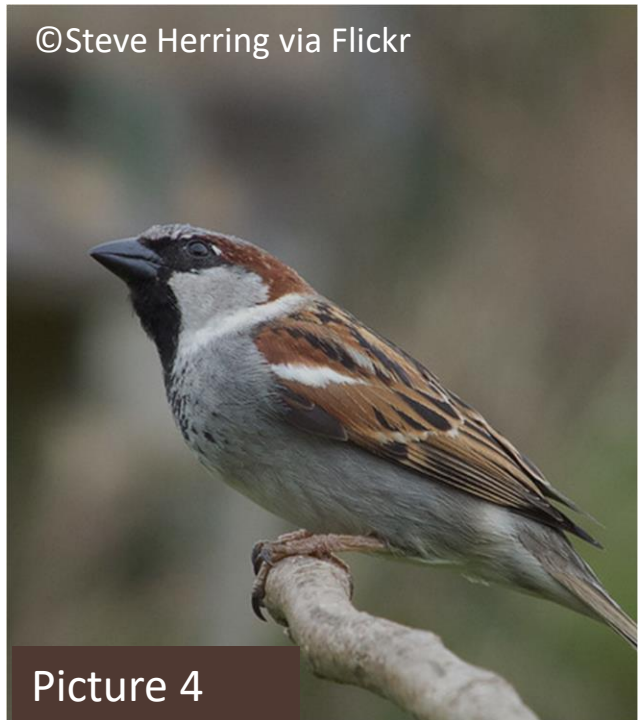
Picture 2



Picture 6



Picture 3



Picture 4

©Summer Steenberg via Flickr

©Steve Herring via Flickr

Can you name these Irish Plants and Animals? Try our interactive quiz to learn more about these species [here](#).

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

Ash

Common Name: Ash

Irish Name: Fuinseog

Scientific Name: *Fraxinus excelsior*



Description

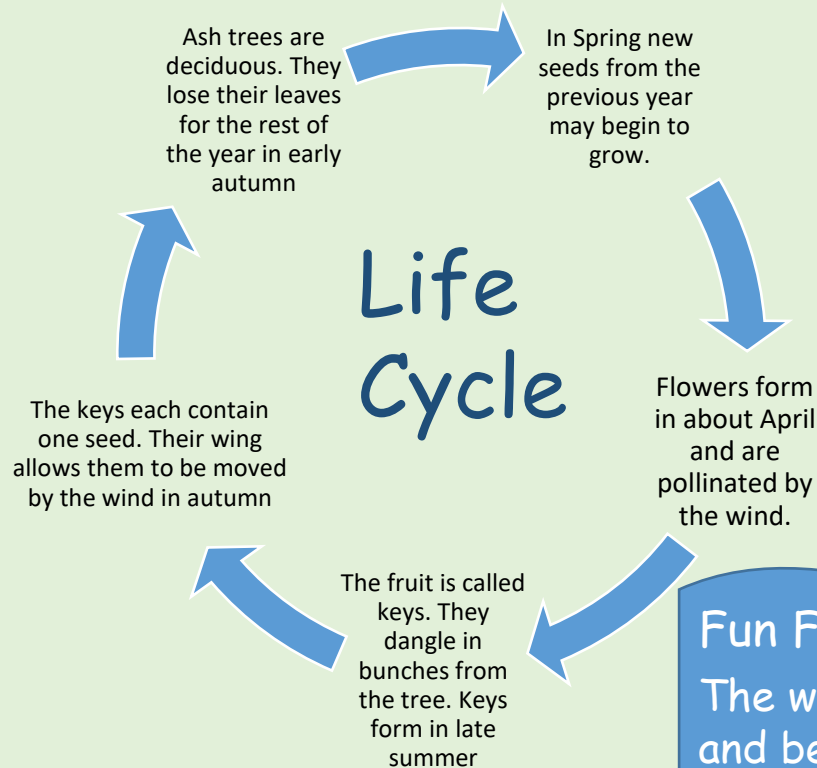
Ash trees can grow up to 40 metres tall. They have a greyish bark. Their leaves grow as leaflets with several leaves growing from the same stem. Their seeds are called keys and hang down in bunches. They look like one wing of the helicopter seed. They start off green and turn brown before falling off.

Habitat found

Ash trees are common and widespread throughout Ireland. They are often seen in hedgerows and in woodlands as well as in parks and gardens and school grounds.



Life Cycle



Fun Facts!

The wood from Ash trees is extremely dense and because of that it is often used in furniture making and to make hurley and camogie sticks.

Flowers: Spring

Fruits: Late summer

Leaves: Late to arrive in spring and quick to drop in autumn

Ash

Draw a picture of how you think an ash tree infected with ash dieback may look .



Threats

Although ash is widespread in Ireland these trees are under threat. Ash trees are at risk of a fungal infection called “ash dieback”. This has become widespread throughout Europe. It causes discolouration of the bark and leaves, dieback of the shoots and branches and can lead to the death of the tree. A very small number of trees are resistant (are able to fight off the infection). This is important because fungicides (which may kill the fungal infection) are difficult to use as treatment.

Ash keys start off green and turn brown when the seed inside is ready. They are then blown off the tree.

In winter ash trees look quite distinctive. Their branches are grey with black tips and look like pencils!

Ash leaves are slow to bud. They often appear later than their flowers in April

Ash flowers are small and dark with no petals. They don't attract insects so must rely on the wind to pollinate them

Ash keys rattle in the wind as they knock against each other in late summer.

Life Cycle

Draw a picture of an ash tree in late autumn. Does it have leaves or keys?

Did you know..

Ash trees are very important for animals living in the same ecosystem. They support a huge variety of different species of insects. Their keys are also an important food source for birds, squirrels and mice.

Fun Fact:

Ash trees are dioecious. This means that trees are either male or female (have only male or female flowers) although some trees can have male and female flowers on different branches. Only female trees will produce fruit (keys). This is slightly unusual but holly trees are another example of a tree which will be either male or female.

Wild Garlic

Common Name: Ramsons or wild garlic

Irish Name: Creamh

Scientific Name: *Allium ursinum*



Description

Wild Garlic (also known as ramsons) is a perennial* plant which has white, star shaped flowers and long, pointed leaves. It grows quite low to the ground. It has a very strong, “garlicky” smell which you may notice if passing by.

Habitat found

Wild garlic is quite common and widespread throughout Ireland. It is often seen at the edges of woodlands and along hedgerow. You generally won't see just one plant by itself, they tend to grow like carpets all together.



Flowers: April- May

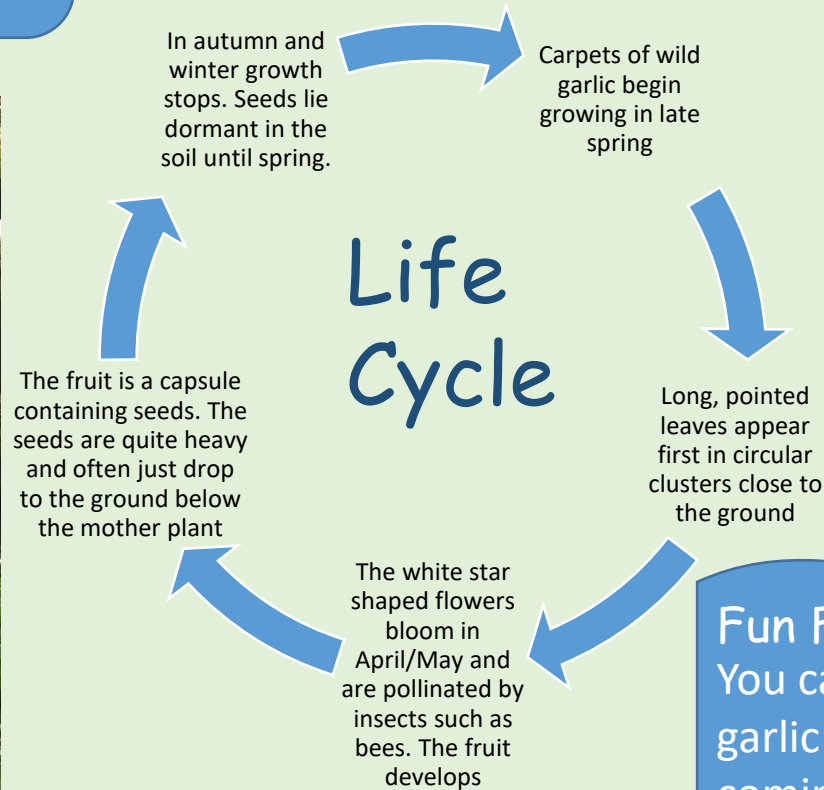


Photo: Michael Mueller via Flickr.com

Fun Facts!

You can eat the flowers and leaves of wild garlic! It is the leaves that the strong smell is coming from. The garlic we buy in shops is bulb garlic which is a relative of wild garlic.

*Perennial plants are those that live for more than two years.

Wild Garlic

Draw a picture that shows any differences you see between wild garlic and either Lords and Ladies or Lily-of-the-Valley



Wild Garlic



Photo: Amanda Slater via Flickr.com

Wild Garlic in Medicine

Wild garlic has been used for many years for medicinal reasons. According to Irish folklore wild garlic was used to treat lung infections as well as other ailments. Now we know that it contains lots of beneficial vitamins and nutrients which may help lower cholesterol and blood pressure.

Lords and Ladies



Photo: Peter O'Connor via Flickr

Lily-of-the-Valley



Photo: ElPadawan via Flickr.com

Draw a picture of a carpet of wild garlic in bloom

Take care not to confuse wild garlic with Lords and Ladies or Lily-of-the-Valley. These are both poisonous plants that often grow in similar areas to garlic and whose leaves are similar. If unsure rely on your nose! Wild garlic leaves have a strong smell which should leave you in no doubt!

Fun Facts!

The scientific (Latin) name *Allium ursinum* means "Bear garlic". This comes from a old legend that when bears woke from hibernation they would eat lots of wild garlic to get rid of any toxins that built up over winter and to begin spring in good health!

Black Headed Gull

Common Name: Black headed gull

Irish Name: Sléibhín

Scientific Name: *Larus ridibundus*



Description

Black headed gulls are one of the smaller members of the gull family. They are slightly confusingly named as the head is white with just a black dot on the side most of the year. In summer their head is actually dark brown. They have red, webbed feet and a red beak. Their body is mostly white and grey. They have black tips on the end of their wings.

Habitat found

Black headed gulls are one of the most common species of gull in Ireland. They are found inland as well as in coastal regions. They will spend time on inland lakes. They are attracted to places which often have food lying around such as urban environments and school yards after lunch!

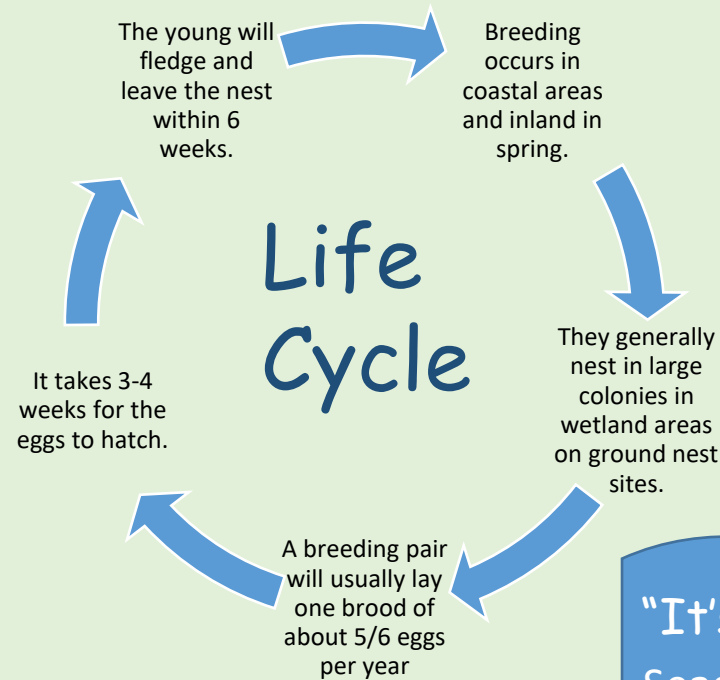
Adult black headed gulls in summer



Photo: Steenbergs via Flickr.com

Sounds like...

Black headed gulls can make a lot of noise especially in flocks. They have several calls which are harsh sounding variations on a screech of "kreee- aaa"



Adult black headed gull in winter



Photo: David Merrett via Flickr

"It's a seagull"

Seagull is a nickname often given to many different species of gulls including the black headed gull but there is no specific bird whose real name is seagull.

Black Headed Gull

Draw a picture of an black headed gull in winter

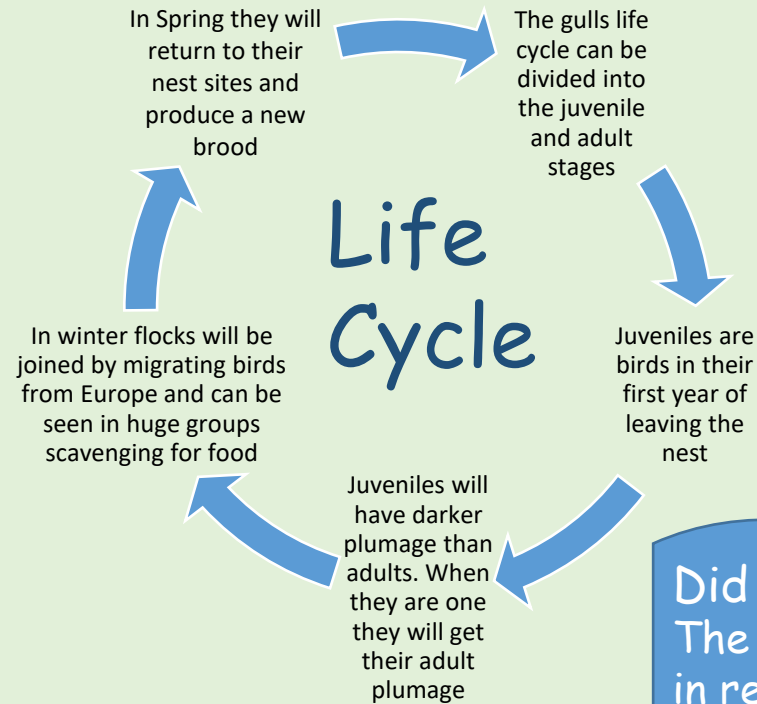


Diet:

Black headed gulls mainly feed on insects and worms in fields but will also scavenge for food in urban areas, around fisheries etc. They will eat a large variety of food they find from fish to leftover sandwiches.

Predators:

The main danger from predators comes during nesting season. Since black headed gulls are ground nesting birds they are vulnerable to attack from mammals as well as other large birds such as crows.



Draw a picture of a juvenile black headed gull



Juvenile

Photo: Gareth Williams via Flickr.com

Seen in Ireland: Year-round

Did you know....

The numbers of black headed gulls have been falling in recent years. Changes in their habitats is a big reason why. Another cause is the arrival of the American mink, an invasive species who preys on the eggs and chicks at nest sites.

House Sparrow

Common Name: House sparrow

Irish Name: Gealbhan binne

Scientific Name: *Passer domesticus*



Description

House sparrows are a small bird with a pale chest and dark brown back, wings and head. The female is more dull in colour than the male. Their beaks are short, dark and straight.

Habitat found

The house sparrow is widespread throughout Ireland. It is one of the top 20 most common garden birds. They are also seen in parks, farmland and urban areas.

Photo: Steve Herring via Flickr.com

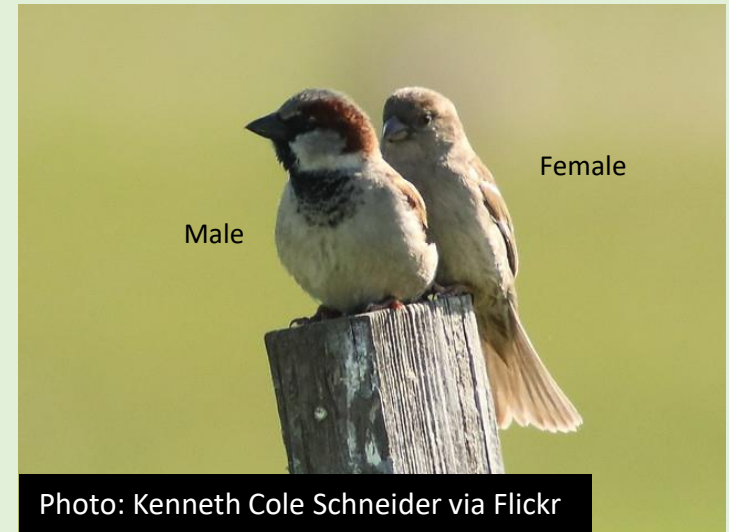
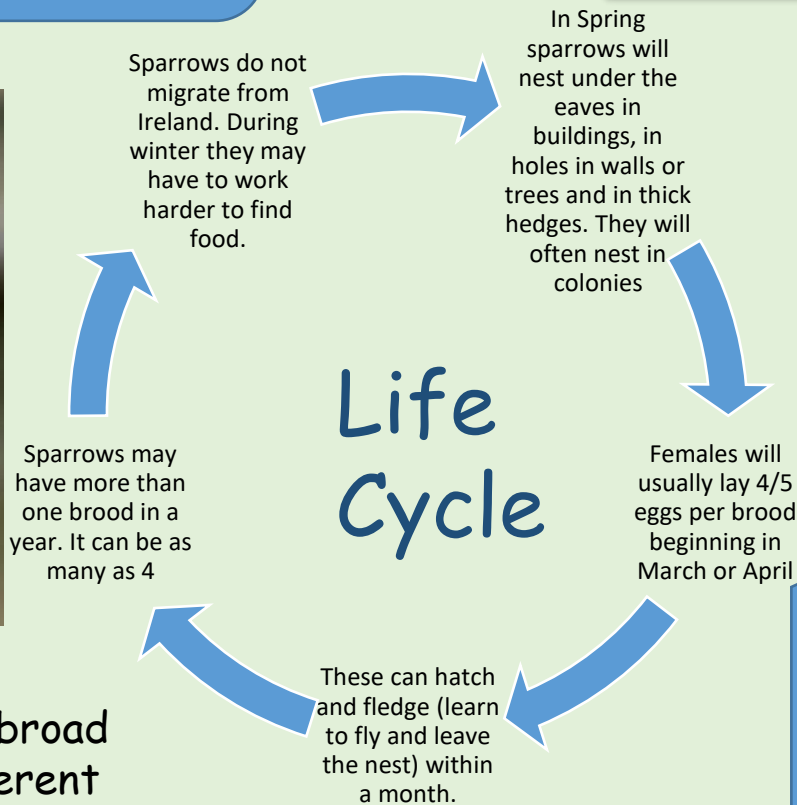


Photo: Kenneth Cole Schneider via Flickr

Fun Facts!

You can often tell male and female birds apart by their colour. Males are generally brighter or more distinctive. This allows them to attract a mate. Females generally need to use camouflage when they are sitting on eggs to avoid attracting predators

Seen in Ireland: Year-round. House sparrows do not migrate abroad in winter. They may move to different areas searching for food depending on the season and then return to the nest site in spring.

House Sparrow

Draw a picture that shows the differences between the male and female house sparrow

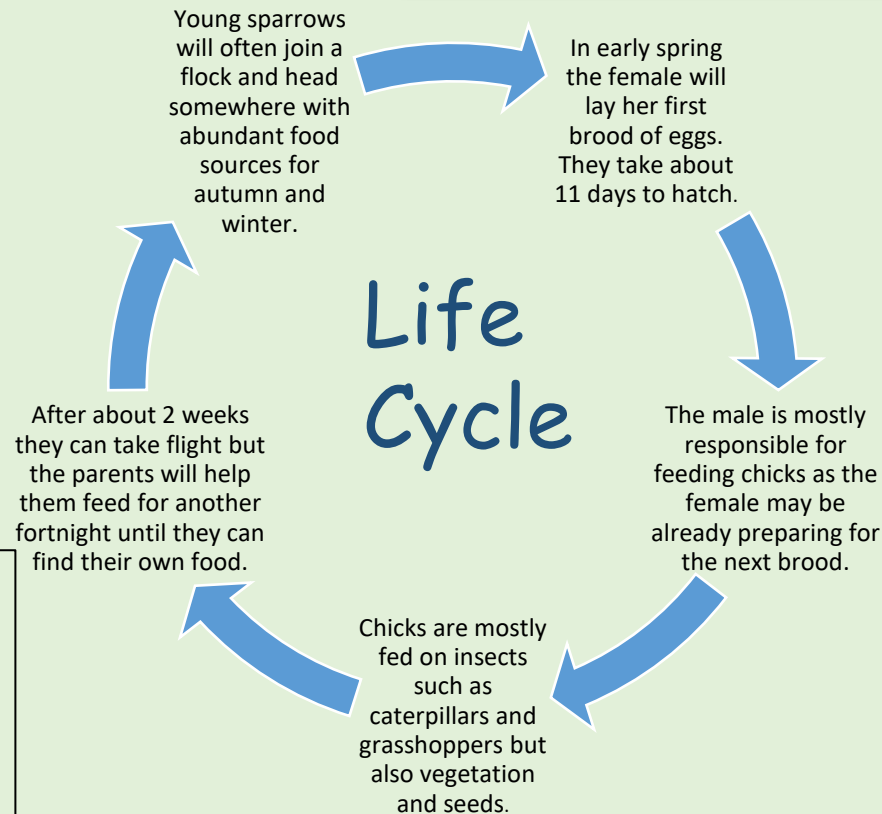


Diet

Sparrows are omnivores (they eat meat and plants). They eat a selection of seeds, insects, buds and will also eat lots of things left on bird tables. Their beaks are small enough to be able to use peanut bird feeders.

Predators

House sparrows have several predators in Ireland. These include larger birds, such as sparrowhawks and even cats! They will generally build their nests in hard to access or hidden areas to protect their young.



Draw a picture of a nest with a brood of sparrows being fed

Did you know... When chicks first hatch from their eggs they can not fly or leave the nest so they are completely reliant on their parents to bring them food. Their feathers are not yet suited to flying and they will often look quite different than the adults. The chicks will compete with their siblings to try and get the most food by chirping and opening their beaks as wide as they can when a parent returns with food. Often, if there is not enough food the largest chicks will be given most of the available food. This is to ensure that at least some of the brood survives.

Sparrow Sounds!

Sparrows make a variety of sounds to communicate. If listening out for them you may hear either a lively "chirrup" or a lower sounding "churrrr".

Pill bug

Common Name: Pill bug

Irish Name: Míol críon ((woodlouse))

Scientific Name: *Armadillidium vulgare*



Description

Pill bugs are one species of woodlouse. There are about 32 different species of woodlouse in Ireland! They are not an insect but actually a member of the Crustacean family (which also includes lobsters and crabs!). They have 14 legs and a tough outer covering (exoskeleton). The pill bug is dark in colour with a ridged back. They have a pair of antennae. Other species of woodlice found in Ireland can be different shades of grey but otherwise look very similar to a pill bug.

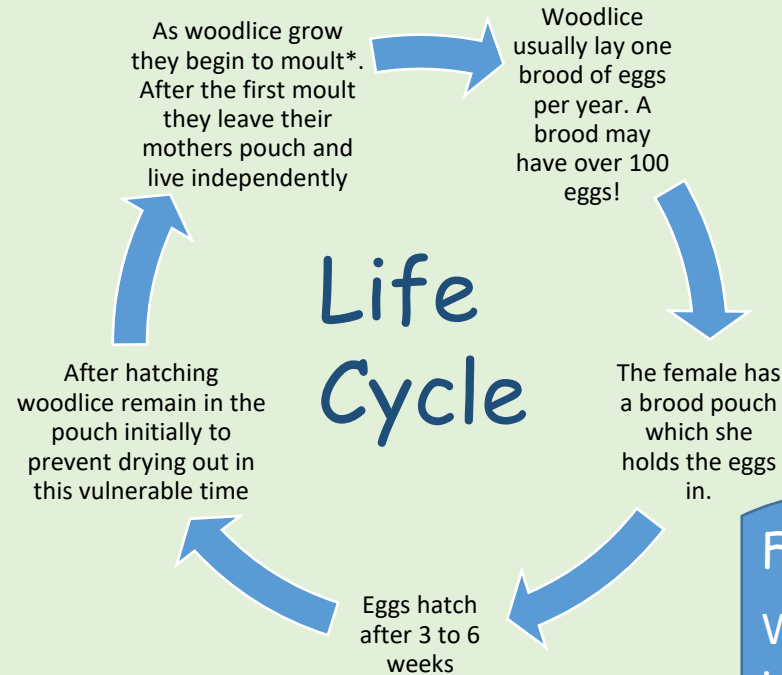
Habitat found

Pill bugs and many other woodlice are widespread throughout Ireland. They are found underneath things in large numbers such as rotten logs, piles of leaves and flower pots in gardens, parks, woodlands and even school grounds! They are also often found in crevices or gaps such as between bricks or under window sills. They are attracted to damp, dark places as they can easily dry out if out in the open or exposed to sunlight.



Photo: Peter O'Connor via Flickr

Seen in Ireland: Year-round



* Moulting is the process of shedding skin or an outer covering. This is necessary when animals with a fixed or inflexible outer layer are growing.

Photo: Larry Jacobsen via Flickr



Photo: Larry Jacobsen via Flickr



Fun Facts!

When a pill bug is threatened or scared it will roll into a ball to protect itself (similar to a hedgehog). This gives the pill bug its nickname "roly poly". Other species of woodlice can not do this.

Pill bug

Draw a picture of any suitable habitats you can think of for a pill bug in your school grounds.



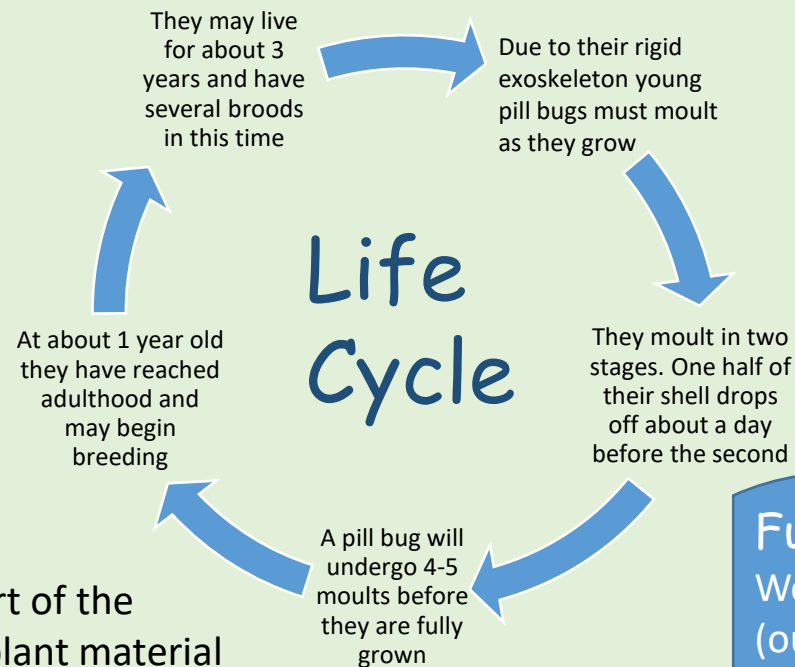
Diet

Despite their name woodlice do not only feed on wood. It is a part of their diet but they eat lots of different dead or decaying plant matter including logs, twigs and branches, leaves which have fallen onto the ground, rotting fruit, fungi and even animal poo!

Predators

Woodlice have many predators. A wide variety of birds, small mammals, frogs etc will feed on woodlice. Some birds may eat huge numbers in a single day if they come across a large group under a log or stone. There is also a few spiders that feed almost exclusively on woodlice with specially adapted features to penetrate the defences of the woodlice.

Draw a picture of a pill bug before and after it notices a predator approaching



Fun Facts!

Woodlice can lose water vapour through their exoskeleton (outer covering). This makes them vulnerable to drying out. This is why they are attracted to damp, shaded places and why you will not see them out in the open (especially on a sunny day!)

Did you know....Woodlice are a crucial part of the ecosystem. As they are feeding on dead plant material they are helping to recycle nutrients and return them to the soil whilst at the same time ensuring that plant matter does not build up.

Red Squirrel

Common Name: Red Squirrel

Irish Name: Iora rua

Scientific Name: *Sciurus vulgaris*



Description

Red squirrels are mostly reddish brown in colour with a white patch on their underbelly. They have a bushy tail, long pointy ears (with distinctive tufts of hair on top) and a triangular face. They are the only native squirrel in Ireland. The grey squirrel is the other member of the family. It is larger and grey or brownish in colour and was brought here from America

Habitat found

Red squirrels are fairly scarce in many parts of Ireland. They are found in isolated, woodland habitats. They generally live in hollows of trees or will build a "drey". A drey is built from twigs, leaves and other materials. It looks like a large bird's nest but with a hole in the middle which the squirrel gets inside rather than sitting on top as a bird would.



Photo: Herdiephoto via Flickr.com



Photo: Chris Parker via Flickr.com

Life Cycle

During winter squirrels may spend several days at a time in their dreys if the weather is very bad but they do not hibernate!

Baby squirrels (kits) are born in late spring/early summer.

In summer time red squirrels will spend most of their time up in trees and will only briefly come onto the ground looking for food

During autumn they will hide extra food in stashes near but not in their home

When food is scarce in winter they will go back and find the hidden food stashes

Seen in Ireland: Year-round (they do not hibernate!)

Did you know... red squirrels were once much more widespread in Ireland. However, when grey squirrels were brought to Ireland about 100 years ago this led to the numbers of red squirrels dropping. This is not because the grey squirrels attack or eat the red squirrels but rather because the grey squirrels "outcompete" them. This means that when both live in the same place the grey squirrels are better at surviving there. Grey squirrels can eat a wide variety of food in many Irish woodlands. They spend more of their time gathering food. Grey squirrels are also able to eat certain seeds or nuts before they ripen and red squirrels do not. While the red squirrels are waiting for these seeds to become ripe the grey squirrels may have eaten them all!

Fun Facts!

Red squirrels are excellent at running across narrow branches and jumping across the tops of trees. They have long, sharp claws which help them to climb and grip and their long tails help them to keep their balance and avoid falling.

Red Squirrel

Draw a picture of a red squirrel looking for food in winter

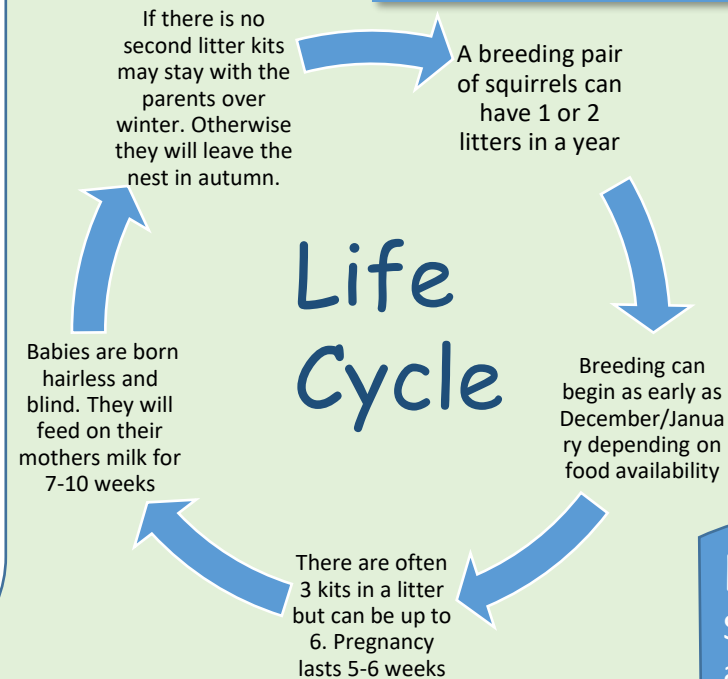


Diet:

Red squirrels are herbivores. They feed on a variety of fruit and buds but mostly seeds and nuts such as pine cones, acorns, horse chestnuts and hazelnuts. They will often stash some extra food away during autumn so they can have some available for winter when food is scarce.

Predators:

The pine marten is a natural predator of squirrels. However it may actually be helping the red squirrel! Grey squirrels are more at risk of attack from pine martens and their presence can cause the numbers of grey squirrels to decrease leaving opportunities for red squirrels to take over!



Differences between red and grey squirrel



Photo: Paul Buxton via Flickr.com



Fun Facts!

Squirrels are sometimes called “nature’s gardeners” because they accidentally plant trees/shrubs in their habitats. Most of the food they stash away for winter is seeds (acorns, horse chestnuts etc) which they often hide by burying under the soil. If they forget where they put it this seed can grow into a new plant. This eventually helps the squirrel population as when the tree grows they will have lots more of that food!

Did you know... another reason for the drop in numbers of red squirrels in Ireland is the spread of squirrel pox. Grey squirrels “carry” this disease (not in a bag!). This means that the disease lives in their body but does not kill them. However red squirrels who live near a “carrier” can be infected (just like catching a cold) and will generally die from the disease.