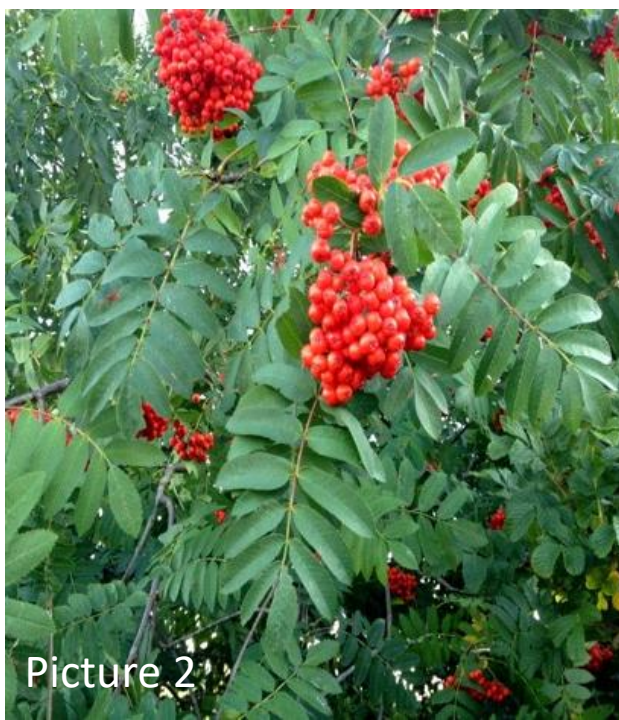




Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3



Picture 4

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Picture 5

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Picture 6

Can you name these Irish Plants and Animals?

• Picture 1

• Picture 2

• Picture 3

• Picture 4

• Picture 5

• Picture 6

# Common Nettle

Common Name: Common Nettle

Irish Name: Neantóg

Scientific Name: *Urtica dioica*



## Description

Nettles grow to 60-100cm high and are well-known for their unpleasant sting. They have spear-shaped toothed leaves, which are arranged in opposites.

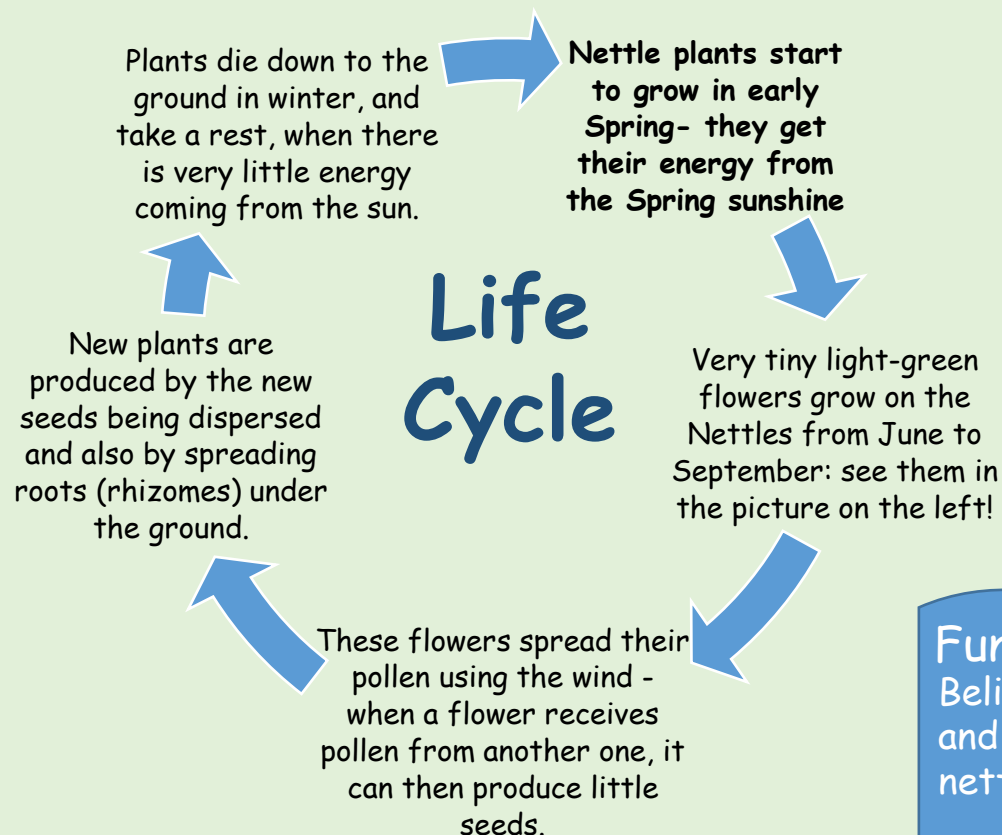
## Habitat found

The Common Nettle is usually found as an understory plant in wetter environments, but can also be found in grassland and meadows. It is an important food plant for the caterpillars of many Irish butterfly species.



**Flower:** July – September

**Fruit:** October



**DO NOT TOUCH** a nettle unless you are wearing rubber gloves!!

The Common Nettle's sting comes from acid which is released when the tiny hairs break off and stick into your skin.

## Fun Facts!

Believe it or not, Nettle Soup is very tasty, and because it is made by boiling up the nettle leaves, it does not sting at all!



# Common Nettle

The seeds rest on the soil during **Winter**.

In **Spring** the seeds start to grow into new Nettle plants. Old plants grow again too.

In **Summer** the Nettles grow some tiny flowers.

By **Autumn** the flowers have turned into seeds. The seeds look like tiny circles. They blow away with the wind.

## Life Cycle

Draw a Nettle Leaf:

Draw the tiny Summer flowers:

Draw some caterpillars eating the nettle leaves:

# Rowan Tree

**Common Name:** Rowan / Mountain Ash

**Irish Name:** Caorthann

**Scientific Name:** *Sorbus aucuparia*

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## Description

The Rowan is a medium sized tree which grows to about 15 metres tall. It has distinctive Ash-like leaves, although it is not actually a species of Ash. The leaves are green on both sides, with up to 9 pairs of oblong, toothed leaflets.

## Habitat found

It grows in most types of soil. In the wild it is found in 'glens' or little valleys, beside mountain streams, in woods and rocky places. It is a popular tree for planting in gardens and in parks, so you are likely to find one not too far from your school!



**Flowers:** May – June  
**Fruit:** August – October

Rowan trees are deciduous: this means that they drop their leaves in winter. This helps them to save energy – as there is not much point having leaves in the winter if there is very little sunshine to make food from.

The Rowan begins to grow again in Spring. Its dark green leaves first appear in April.



Large, flat heads of numerous creamy-white 5-petalled flowers bloom in May and June.

Once a flower receives pollen from another Rowan flower (usually carried there by an insect!) it turns into a berry, and the familiar clusters of red berries appear in this way in late Summer and Autumn.

The berries feed many types of birds in the Autumn. The birds help the tree to spread its seeds far and wide in their droppings!

## Life Cycle

## Fun Facts!

A Mistle Thrush (the 'first cousin' of a Song Thrush) will defend a Rowan tree, keeping other birds away; therefore having its very own 'restaurant' or feeding place for the winter.



# Rowan Tree

Draw a bird eating the berries from the Rowan Tree in Autumn:

In **Winter** the berries fall to the ground and the seeds will get washed into the soil. The tree also drops its leaves

In **Spring** Rowan Trees start to grow new leaves.

## Life Cycle

By **Autumn** these flowers have turned into bright red berries, with seeds inside.

In **Summer** groups of small white flowers grow all over the tree.

Draw Rowan Tree leaves:

# Robin

**Common Name:** Robin or Robin Red-breast

**Irish Name:** Spideóg

**Scientific Name:** *Erithacus rubecula*

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## Description

Probably the most familiar garden bird with its bright orange-red face and breast. Its upperparts are greyish brown, and its belly is a greyish white. The beak is dark and pointed. They can seem plump and rounded sometimes, especially in cold weather when the birds fluff out their feathers to trap air: this forms an extra layer of insulation around their tiny body. Female and Males look alike.

## Habitat found

The Robin can be found across Ireland, in gardens, hedgerows, parks and woodlands. It mainly feeds on insects including flies, caterpillars and small worms.

It is a friendly bird, and readily comes to bird tables,

Most nests are located on or near the ground in hollows, nooks and crannies.



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Parents help the little chicks for about 3 weeks after fledging, and they may have two more broods in the same year. In Autumn all Robins begin to live on their own for a few months, until Spring arrives.

After a mild winter Robins will start looking for a partner; as early as January

A cup-shaped nest is built by the mammy or 'female'. It is made of leaves and moss, and is lined with hair.

The female will lay 4-6 eggs in April; one egg each day until the clutch is complete.

She sits on the eggs to keep them warm for 13 days; her partner will bring her food, so she doesn't get too hungry.

When the chicks start to leave the nest (fledge) at two weeks old, they are still not able to fly very well for a few more days, even though they have all of their feathers.

The chicks hatch without feathers, and need their parents to give them food and warmth. Both the mammy and the daddy or 'male' look after the nestlings.

## Life Cycle



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Image by Thomas Love via Flickr.com

## Fun Facts!

Robins are very friendly! Robins often follow gardeners around the garden hoping to catch insects that they have dug up. If you spend enough time working in your garden at school or at home, you will surely make friends with a Robin!

# Robin

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Draw the mammy and daddy Robin at their nest:

In **Autumn** the chicks will move away from their parents, and they will spend the **Winter** on their own.

In **Spring** the Robin finds a partner and builds a nest

## Life Cycle

By **late Summer** the chicks have hatched and are being fed caterpillars and other food by both parents, until they are ready to fly.

In **Summer** the mammy lays about 5 eggs in the nest. She sits on them to keep them warm.

# Song Thrush

Common Name: Song Thrush

Irish Name: Smólach ceoil

Scientific Name: *Turdus philomelos*



## Description

The Song Thrush is about the same size as a Blackbird. It has plain brown upperparts and a creamy underside, with arrow-shaped dark spots in lines down the breast and flanks. Its legs are pale pinkish-grey.

## Habitat found

The Song Thrush lives and breeds throughout Ireland - mainly in hedgerows and gardens. It is usually seen in ones and twos - never in flocks. You can commonly see it bounding along the ground in search of worms. It also eats fruit, such as Rowan berries, and it will eat snails in drought/hard weather.



In **Autuman** and **Winter** the birds will leave the nest site to find good feeding grounds.

In **Spring** the daddy or 'male' bird sits on top of a tree and sings loudly to boast about the territory he 'owns' in order to attract a 'female' or mammy.

The parents often have another 'brood' (a small family) or two in the same **Summer**.

Once he finds a partner, she builds a nest, usually deep in cover in trees, bushes, ivy or brambles. He brings her food, so that she doesn't get hungry.

## Life Cycle

Once the chicks hatch, both parents feed them until they are ready to fly, which also takes about two weeks.

The female lays 3-5 eggs over a few days. On the last day of laying she will sit on the nest to keep the eggs warm. This is called incubation, and it lets the chicks grow inside the eggs. The chicks are ready to hatch after about two weeks of incubation.



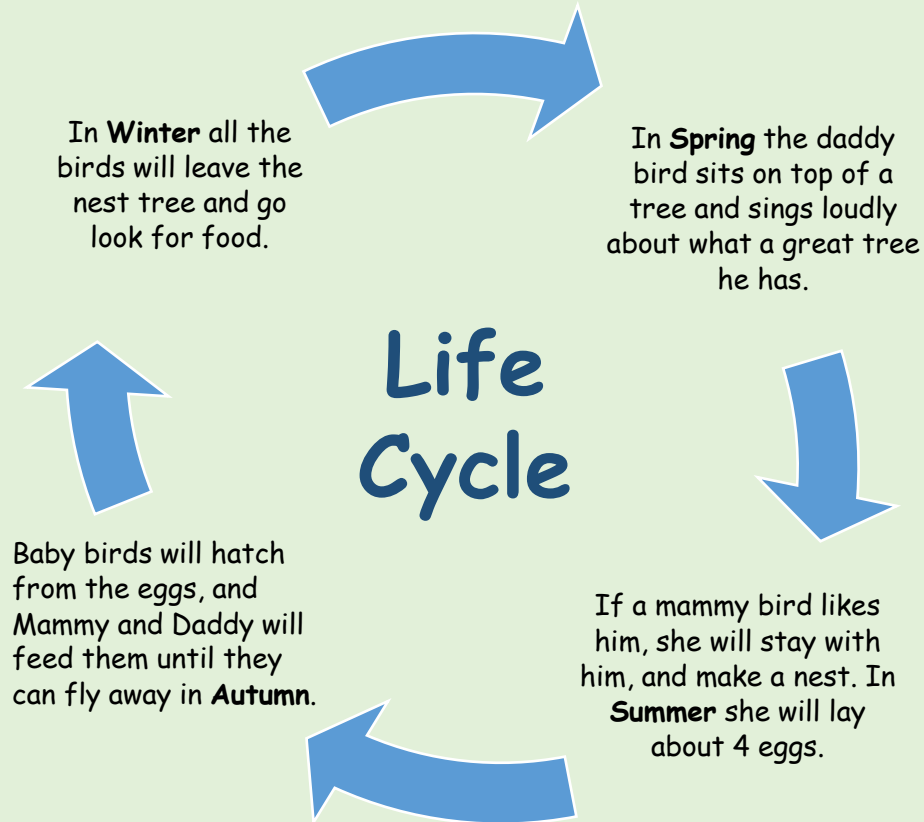
## Fun Facts!

- The Song Thrush's song is really variable and distinctive. It sings a phrase then repeats it three or four times before singing a new phrase and repeating it in the same way.
- The Song Thrush likes to eat snails. It breaks the shell off, by smashing it against a stone with a flick of the head. If you ever find a stone, with lots of smashed snail shells all around it, you'll know you've found a Thrush's 'anvil' or dinner table!!



# Song Thrush

Draw the mammy and daddy Thrush eating Snails and Berries:



# Small Tortoiseshell

Common Name: Small Tortoiseshell

Irish Name: Ruán Beag

Scientific Name: *Aglais urticae*



## Description

This beautiful butterfly has a wingspan of around 5cm. It is mainly reddish-orange with black markings and blue spots around the border. The underside is quite dull.

## Habitat found

This is a very common butterfly which visits gardens at homes and schools, woodlands and hedgerows. Its caterpillar babies feed on the Common Nettle. The adult butterfly feeds on (drinking nectar from) lots of different flowers.



The butterfly will either breed straight away (if it's still summertime) or else it will go into hibernation for the winter.

Adult butterflies come out of hibernation (a long sleep over winter) in March or April

The mammy or 'female' lays eggs on the underside of nettle leaves.

Eggs hatch after 10 days, and little caterpillars come out. Caterpillars then grow by changing the size of their skin a few times, aka 'moulting'

Moulting is a bit like us getting new clothes as we grow bigger. After their final moult they hang from plant stems, wrapped in a cocoon

They stay in the cocoon as they 'pupate' for about two weeks. They then come out in the shape of a butterfly!

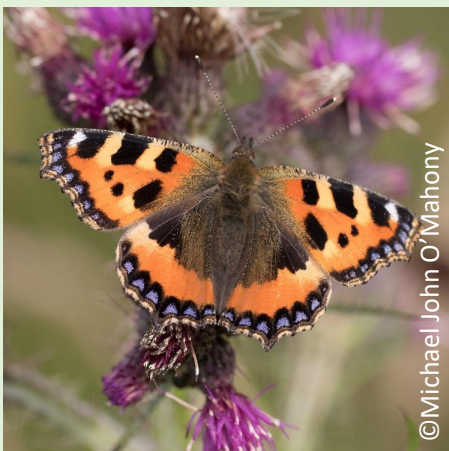
## Life Cycle



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## Fun Fact!

Small tortoiseshells often hibernate in our houses and sheds over the winter. It is better to have them in the shed than the house, as the heating in the house will trick them into thinking that Spring has arrived!



# Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly

Draw a Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly:

Draw a cocoon hanging from under a Nettle leaf:

In **Autumn** they find somewhere warm and dry to sleep for the whole **Winter**.

In **Spring** the butterflies wake up, and find a partner. The mammy lays eggs on Nettles.

Draw the caterpillars crawling around eating the Nettle leaves:

## Life Cycle

By later **Summer** the caterpillars build a cocoon. In only 3 weeks they turn into a Butterfly!

In **early Summer** caterpillars come out of the eggs and start to eat the leaves of the Nettles.

# Common Garden Snail

Common Name: Garden Snail

Irish Name: Seilide garraí

Scientific Name: *Cornu aspersum*

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## Description

This snail's shell is thick, with a wrinkle-like surface. It has about 5 quickly expanding rounds of the shell spiral or 'whorls'. The shell's mouth (the part that the soft body comes out of) is large, with a thickened white 'lip'. The shell is usually pale brown, occasionally yellow, with up to 5 dark spiral bands. They are variable and are often flecked with white or yellow-brown.

## Habitat found

These snails are often associated with gardens and parks, and are also found in dunes, woods and hedgerows. They feed on several kinds of plants including some fruit trees and crop vegetables. During the day they can be found hiding under fallen leaves and other sheltered places close to the ground, for example under fallen Rowan Tree leaves. They are most active at night time.



Snails hibernate when winter comes, by retreating into their shells and sealing off the entrance.

Snails come out of 'hibernation' (a big long sleep over winter) in Spring

Adult snails will lay eggs a few times in the year, if the weather is good; warm and wet weather is what they like best!

After 2-4 weeks the eggs hatch into tiny baby snails, which will grow into an adult in just 2 years!

## Life Cycle

Snails are 'hermaphrodites'- this means that every snail has female and male body parts. So every single snail can lay eggs!

Each snail will lay up to a hundred white pearly eggs in the soil.



Image by Andy Hay via Flickr.com

## Fun Facts!

Snails have teeth all over their tongue to help them to chew their food!



# Garden Snail

Draw a Snail eating lettuce in a farmer's field:

In **Winter** snails fall asleep; they get cosy by finding a cool and dark place and by closing off their shell's entrance.

Snails wake up from 'hibernation' in **Spring**

In **Autumn** these eggs turn into baby snails and start to grow by eating lots of leaves.

## Life Cycle

In **Summer** snails lay white eggs in the soil.

Draw a Snail laying eggs in the soil: