



zoom in on birds



Background information

Most scientists believe that birds are descended from a species of dinosaur. All have feathers and wings. All lay eggs with hard shells. Most can fly. They are vertebrates and are warm-blooded. Hollow bones and no teeth facilitate flying.

Key areas to study

Classification, Habitat, Food, Place in food chain/web, Adaptation, and Threats

Classification

Four main types: Waterfowl, Birds of Prey, Perching, and Flightless Birds



Robin on branch
Photo: Cormac Madden

Thrush

Helping birds in December

Make a birdfeeder for birds: See www.blackrockec.ie Click on 'Paddy's School Garden' and then on 'November Projects'.

Clean out used bird boxes by using boiling water: Position boxes now so that birds will get accustomed to them for spring nesting. Face them East, North East or South East. (South is too warm; West is too wet; North is

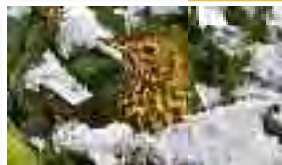
too cold). They can be purchased from www.birdwatchireland.ie and www.conservationsservices.ie.

Make a bird-bath and a bird-table: Check out www.blackrockec.ie and click on 'Paddy's School Garden' and then on 'December Projects'.

Learn about the robin and wren: See http://www.rte.ie/radio/mooneygoeswild/nature_dec.html.

Useful websites and resources

- ✦ www.learnnc.org/lp/media/articles/wildnbo701/birddiagram.pdf 'Parts of a bird'.
- ✦ www.biology.ie. Submission of bird sightings.
- ✦ www.enfo.ie. General information on birds.
- ✦ <http://www.birdsireland.com/> Website of bird expert, Eric Dempsey.
- ✦ http://www.fatbirder.com/links_geo/europe/ireland.html. Interesting facts on birds in different counties.
- ✦ *The Complete Field-Guide to Ireland's Birds* by Eric Dempsey and Michael O'Clery (Gill & Macmillan, 2010)
- ✦ *Pocket Guide to the Common Birds of Ireland* by Eric Dempsey & Michael O'Clery (Gill & Macmillan, 1995)
- ✦ *Birdwatching in Ireland with Eric Dempsey* (Gill & Macmillan, 1995)
- ✦ *Bird Migration* by Chris Meade (Littlehampton Book Services Ltd 1983)
- ✦ Drawing birds using Gordon Darcy's book *Nature*: See www.gordondarcy.ie.



Literacy/Litearthacht

Ornithologist (Éaneolaí) A person who studies birds. (Duine a dhéanann staidéar ar éin).

Nestling (Gearrach bhéal neide/Scalltán) A young bird that is too young to leave the nest. (Éan óg atá ró-óg chun an nead a fhágáil).

Fledgling (Gearrach/Scallamán) A young bird that has just fledged. (Éan óg atá díreach tar éis eitilt a fhoghlaim).

Plumage (Clúmh) The covering of

feathers on a bird. (An clúdach cleití ar éin).

Beak (Gob) Projecting jaws of a bird. (Gialla éin atá ag gobach amach).

Crown (Mullach) The highest part of a bird's head. (An chuid is airde de cheann éin).

Nape (Baic) The back of a bird's neck. (Cúl mhuineál éin).

Rump (Geadán/ Rumpa) The lower back. (Íochtar an droma).

December



Puffin

Photo: Aiveen Mulally



Brent Geese

Photo: Michael Glynn

Active Learning

Identifying bird sounds

Check www.rspb.org.uk. Get the children to guess which bird is singing.

Take part in a national bird survey

Check www.birdwatchireland.ie for 2010-2011. The top 10 garden birds in the last survey were:

Bird	Rank
Robin (Spideog)	1
Blackbird (Lon Dubh)	2
Blue tit (Meantán Gorm)	3
Chaffinch (Rí Rua)	4
Great tit (Meantán Mór)	5
Magpie (Snag Breac)	6
Song thrush (Smólach Ceoil)	7
Starling (Druid)	8
Coal tit (Meantán Dubh)	9
Gold crest (Ciorbhui)	10

Survey 'Are the school grounds bird-friendly?'

See www.into.ie. Click on *In-Touch* archive for January/February 2011 'Working in tandem with the seasons January/February' on page 65.

Take part in quizzes on the following

Heron, rook, swan, thrush, starling, white-tailed eagle. See <http://www.rte.ie/radio/mooneygoeswild/schoolwatch/index.html>

Use binoculars

Set up a birdfeeder near the classroom. Leave a pair of binoculars (8x30) on a table with bird guide and survey sheet.

Seagull
Photo: Aiveen Mulally

Bird migration lesson

Have the following items in a suitcase: jumper, umbrella, toothbrush, toothpaste, suntan lotion, soap, water, map or compass, sunglasses, comb, food. A human needs these going on holiday. Why doesn't a bird need them when it's migrating? Go through each item and explain why.

(Idea: Abigail McSherry)

Bird Activities

Check www.naturedetectives.org.uk for lots of activities.



Tits on feeder

Photo: Cormac Madden

Interesting facts

- ✦ There are 18 birds seriously threatened with extinction in Ireland such as the corncrake, the barn owl and the curlew.
- ✦ Wexford Wildfowl Reserve holds over 50% of the world's population of White-Fronted Geese.
- ✦ The Red Kite, the Golden Eagle and the White-Tailed Eagle have been reintroduced to Ireland.
- ✦ The Great-Spotted Woodpecker is taking up residence of its own accord.

Place names and birds

Some place names derived from names of birds:

- ✦ Glenasmole from Gleann na Smól – the thrushes' glen.
- ✦ Drumcoe from Droim Cuaiche – the ridge of the cuckoo.
- ✦ Lettertrain from Leitir Thraonach – the hillside of the corncrakes.
- ✦ Craiganuller from Craig an Iolair – the eagle's rock. See www.logainm.ie.

The science of flying

How does a bird's wing work? See

<http://fatlion.com/science/paperairplanes.html>.

A demonstration of this principle can be found on this video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bv3m57u6ViE>.



Robin on bird table

Photo: Cormac Madden

Videos

- ✦ This extract from David Attenborough's *Life of Birds* depicts the amazing lyre bird imitating the sounds of cameras and chainsaws in the forest. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjEoKdfos4Y>
- ✦ This video from [birdwatchireland.ie](http://www.birdwatchireland.ie) shows a kestrel feeding its young. <http://www.youtube.com/user/BirdWatchIreland#p/a/u/o/X5Qy6zxNUEc>
- ✦ Watch a moorhen feeding her chicks in St Stephen's Green. <http://www.rte.ie/radio/mooneygoeswild/MoorHens.html>
- ✦ Watch kingfishers and blue tits feeding their chicks. <http://www.rte.ie/radio/mooneygoeswild/kingfisherdocumentary.html>



PADDY MADDEN lectures on SESE in Coláiste Mhuire, Marino Institute of Education. He is a Heritage in School specialist - see www.into.ie. His latest book, the 3rd reprint of *Go Wild at School* is available now for €15 plus €2 p&p. To purchase contact paddy.madden@mie.ie. Paddy is also the author of *The School Garden-What to do and When to do it*. This is available from the same email address for €10. Check www.outdoorclassroom.ie for a chance to win €1500 for your school garden! Buiochas do Marie Whelton (MIE) don aistriúchán.

Strand Units covered this month

Environmental awareness, caring for the environment, plant and animal life, science and the environment, the local natural environment.