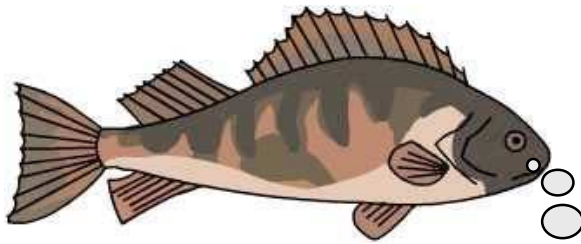


# Aquatic Life

## Something Fishy

Fish have been around for about 500 million years. They were the first animals to have backbones (*vertebrates*). In the beginning, they looked like tadpoles.

Drawings: © Central Fisheries Board



A **vertebrate** is an animal with a backbone. Each animal listed below is a vertebrate.

- **Mammals** – eg rodent, humans, horses, foxes, whales & dolphins.
- **Reptiles** – eg turtles and tortoises with tough shells, meat-eating crocodiles and alligators, snakes and lizards.
- **Amphibians** – eg frogs and tadpoles.
- **Birds** – eg robins, swans, ostriches and penguins.
- ....and Fish!

An interesting fact is that freshwater species are the most threatened species on the planet. They are dying out 5 times faster than animals that live on land.

Fish live in water and breathe with the use of their gills. They have fins. They lay eggs in the water. These eggs contain material which will provide nourishment for the young fish in the first stages of life.



Fish use their gills to breathe by taking in oxygen from the water. Their gills are located on either side of their head.

You can tell the age of a scaly fish by counting the number of rings on its scales. Fish scales are coloured so that the fish will blend in with its surroundings. This is called **camouflage**.

Sometimes the rings on scales are wide and sometimes they are narrow, depending on whether the fish has had a good supply of food.

And speaking of food, fish is an important source of protein, vitamins and minerals. To ensure healthy bodies and minds, humans should have healthy and balanced diets, including plenty of fish!

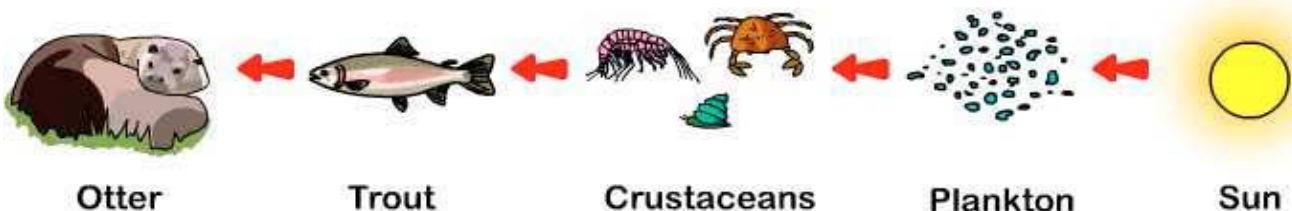


**Something Fishy** is a resource pack which has been produced by the Central Fisheries Board. It is geared towards fifth and sixth class pupils and is linked to the curriculum. Working through the pack will help children become more aware of the importance of good water quality and the dependence of all forms of life on it, particularly fish! For further details contact your regional fisheries board or Mark Corps (Mark.Corps@cfb.ie) at the Central Fisheries Board. Visit the Something Fishy website at [www.somethingfishy.ie](http://www.somethingfishy.ie) and the Central Fisheries Board website at [www.cfb.ie](http://www.cfb.ie)

## Fish In The Food Chain

Freshwater fish live in rivers and lakes, while saltwater fish live in the seas and oceans. Some fish such as the salmon and eels can live in both freshwater and salt water.

Fish may occupy many levels in the food chain throughout their lives. For example, fish eggs and fry are an important food for other fish, birds and insects. Fish such as salmon are predators. They live on freshwater insects and crustaceans in the river and on small fish and crustaceans such as shrimp in the sea. Salmon also serve as food for other animals such as heron, otter, seals, other fish and humans.



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