

# Nature's Web

Issue No. 21

Spring 2011

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Photo by Robbie Murphy

## Year of the Forest

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# Editor's Page

## Ireland's Big Freeze!



Courtesy of NASA

Above: NASA's satellite image of Ireland cover in snow on 22nd Dec 2010. Right & below: Snow scenes from Sherkin Island in December.

Spring is in the air and hopefully the cold weather of winter will be behind us soon. Yet it will be hard for us to forget the freezing temperatures and snowfalls at the end of 2010. Records were broken all around Ireland and according to Met Éireann, it was the coldest December on record. The lowest December air temperature ever measured in the country,  $-17.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ , was recorded at Straide, Co. Mayo, on 25th December. Snow fell in almost all parts of the country, even on Sherkin Island, which rarely sees snow. Why not download NASA's image of Ireland and see if you can find where you live?



Photo by Robbie Murphy



Photo by Susan Murphy Wickens



Photo by Robbie Murphy

## Welcome to the Spring Edition of Nature's Web!



Dear Reader,

Welcome everyone to the Spring issue of Nature's Web. In this issue we wanted to celebrate International Year of the Forest by featuring the rainforests, the work of Kieran Quirke of Coillte, the wonderful facilities Coillte's forests have, particularly their sites for orienteering. John Joyce tells us how intelligent octopi are and we look at Gordon D'Arcy's new nature/art manual for schools. Check out nature news from around the world on page 11 and enjoy a giggle with the jokes on page 13.

We would love to hear your views and comments and suggestions for future articles. Have a good read!

Susan

Email:

editor@naturesweb.ie

Web: [www.naturesweb.ie](http://www.naturesweb.ie)

Editor:

Susan Murphy Wickens

Layout and Design:

Susan Murphy Wickens

Photographs & Clipart:

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Foreign Correspondent:

Michael Ludwig

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Courtesy of BIM

### What you need:

- 4 fillets rainbow or sea trout
- 1 carton natural yoghurt, Greek-style if possible
- Grated rind of a lemon
- 1 teaspoon of freshly grated ginger
- Salt and freshly milled black pepper

## SEAFOOD WITH SUPER TOPPINGS

### Method:

- Combine all the ingredients for the topping.
- Place the fish on a grill pan and spread topping over fillets.
- Cook under a medium heat for 7-10 minutes.

Brought to you by BIM. For more fish recipes visit [www.bim.ie](http://www.bim.ie)

# Pheasant

**Scientific Name:** *Phasianus colchicus*  
**Irish Name:** Piasún



Photo by Susan Murphy Wickens



Photo by Robbie Murphy

**Top:** The colourful male pheasant.  
**Above:** The less colourful female.

The male pheasant is a very striking bird. He has beautiful reddish-brown plumage, a colourful head and neck and a long tail. The female is very different as she has much plainer colouring and a shorter tail. Her paler brown plumage helps to camouflage her when she is on her nest, which she usually builds out of leaves and grass on the ground. Sometimes however, she will roost on trees where she can be safe from foxes. When out and about, pheasants spend the day on the ground searching for roots, berries, seeds, leaves and insects. Pheasants are not native to Ireland but are a species which originally came from Asia and were introduced into Ireland in the 16th century. There is no other bird in Ireland that is similar to the pheasant. Pheasants are gamebirds, which means they are hunted for food and for sport.

## A Colourful Visitor

On Sherkin, my Dad loves feeding the birds in the garden and keeps the feeder well stocked with seed. It attracts many birds but in recent weeks he has got more than he bargained for! Everyday, usually in the morning, a beautiful male pheasant arrives to pick at the seed on the ground. The little birds don't seem to mind the pheasant, which Dad has named George, and they all happily feed together.



Photo by Susan Murphy Wickens

George might like the daffodils as well as the bird seed!

## What does it sound like?

A pheasant has a hoarse alarm call when it is frightened, which sound like *ke-tuk, ke-tuk*. It decreases in strength when the bird flies off.

## Fact File

**Colour:** Female is brown, male has reddish-brown plumage with black bars on feathers. His head is a shiny green, black and violet colour and has red around the eyes. Also has white collar around the neck, but this may not be present on the least common race of the two races that are present in Ireland.

**Length:** 70-90 cm

**Diet:** Roots, berries, seeds, leaves and insects.

**Habitat:** Woodlands, marshes, hilly areas, rough land and tillage farmland.

# The Intelligence of Octopi

**O**ctopi have the largest brains of all the animals without backbones.

They also have eyes as complex as those found in humans and are masters of camouflage, changing their colour and skin texture almost instantaneously, to blend in with their background.

Experiments conducted on an octopus named Frida at Munich Zoo have shown that octopi can be taught complex tasks, such as unscrewing a jam jar to get at the food inside, or even to work their way around mazes, the way a laboratory rat would.

Observations on the mating behaviour of octopi on a reef off Indonesia in recent years show that octopi engage in sophisticated courtship rituals including flirting, passionate hand holding and even keeping rivals away at arm's length. The male octopus carefully selects a mate and then guards her den against all potential rivals until mating takes place, after which he lives for only a short time until the eggs hatch, and then he dies.

Ireland has its own native species called the "Curled Octopus", which are normally very shy and difficult to find in the wild. But you can see them on display in many of the excellent public aquaria around the country at Galway, Bray, Fenit or Dingle.



### A Mind of its Own

Research conducted at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem shows that each arm of an octopus has, quite literally, "a mind of its own".

Each arm has its own intelligence, powered by some 50 million nerve bundles or "neurons" that allow it to perform complex movements set off by a simple command from the octopus's brain.

A severed octopus's arm was even made to move realistically on its own by tickling and stimulating the skin.



### Captain Cackle's Log

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[www.captaincackle.com](http://www.captaincackle.com)





# Insect Eyes

## How do insects see the world?

By Thomas Daguerre

Have you ever looked at the bulging bug eyes of a fly, a wasp or a beetle and wondered how exactly they see the world? Whether, like people, they can see all the amazing colours and shapes we see everyday? It is hard to answer these questions precisely as we cannot take the place of a bumble bee as it visits flowers or an ant as it collects seeds. However, scientists have discovered a great deal about how these small creatures see the world. It is as varied and incredible as the number of different types of insects that live in your garden.

### INSECT EYES

Normal sight in insects depends on two special organs - **Compound eyes** and **simple eyes**.



Photo by Tom Daguerre

compound eye

#### The compound eye

The compound eyes of insects are the main organ of sight. The outer surface of each eye is formed by a number of small lenses called **facets**. They are in a way similar to your pupil letting light into the eye. The number of facets varies from 1 in some insects to 20,000 in others. If there are only a few facets they are circular in shape, but

in most insects there are many facets all packed closely together - in this case they are hexagonal like honeycomb. Behind each facet there is a tube-like structure known as the **ommatidium**. Each one of these ommatidium, or tubes, casts a small segment of the image captured by the facet down into the eye. What this means is that the insect's eye produces a kind of "pixellated" image, much like a digital photo or your computer screen. When all the small pixels are combined an image is created.

#### The simple eye

The simple eye is also known as the **ocelli**. Simple eyes usually number 3 and are placed on the top of the insect's head. As their name suggests, they are very simple and can only detect light or dark.

A great variety of different vision exists in the insect world. Next time you see a colourful beetle or a scuttling spider try and think how they see you!

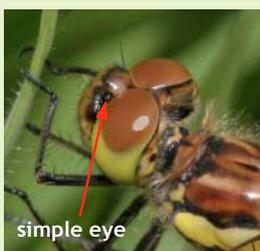


Photo by Robbie Murphy

simple eye

### Big eyes & small eyes

*Predatory insects, like this Robber fly, have big eyes allowing them to see their prey.*



Photo by Ian Wood (ILF)

Predatory species

Robber fly

*Insects that feed on plants often have small eyes and are eaten by the predatory insects.*



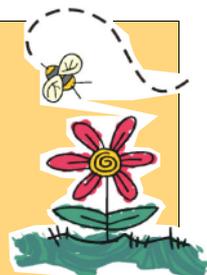
Photo by Charles Lamb (ILF)

Prey Species

Caterpillar

### Colour

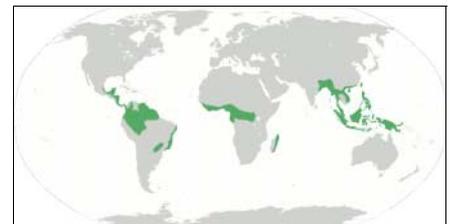
Insects see colours very differently to people. This is because most of them view the world in a different colour spectrum, called ultra violet, which makes certain colours stand out. Bees use ultra violet to find flowers that have lots of pollen in them and other insects, like butterflies, use ultra violet to find a mate.



# Rainforests

## Tropical Rainforests

Tropical rainforests are found near the equator. They occur in places where the weather is warm and humid, enabling the vegetation to grow thick and fast. In these forests rain falls nearly every day throughout the year, with over 200cm of rain falling each year. However, in some rainforests they have much. The largest rainforest in the world is the Amazon Rainforest in South America, which has about 280cm of rain each year.



The areas in green mark the world's tropical rainforests.



## Temperate Rainforests

Temperate rainforests are found in temperate countries of the world. They occur in eastern North and South America, northeastern Asia, southern Australia and western and central Europe. The difference between summer and winter temperatures in these countries is not too extreme - the summers are not very hot nor are the winters very cold. Yearly rainfall in a temperate rainforest ranges from 75 cm to 150 cm.



The areas in green mark the world's temperate rainforests.

Courtesy of ADWilson www.naturespicsonline.com



Hoh Rainforest, Olympic Peninsula, Washington, USA, is a temperate rainforest.

## Rainforest Layers

**Emergent Layer:** This layer consists of trees that extend beyond the canopy layer. They get the most sunlight and provide a haven for small animals and birds.

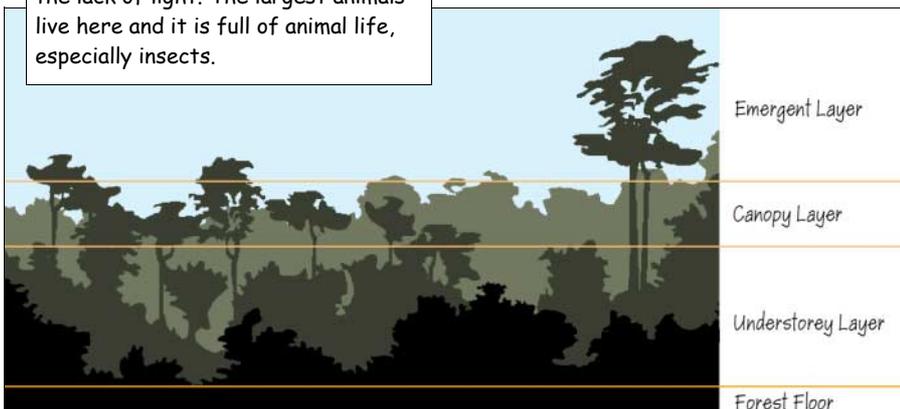
**Canopy Layer:** The top or crown of trees form a 'roof' over the understory and forest floor. Insects, birds, reptiles and mammals live here.

**Understorey Layer:** This is a dark, cool layer where large-leaved plants are found and which also contains a shrub layer.

**Forest Floor:** The darkest part of the forest, where little grows due to the lack of light. The largest animals live here and it is full of animal life, especially insects.

## Rainforest Facts:

- Rainforests once covered 14% of the earth's surface but now only cover 6%.
- Rainforests are home to over half the world's animals and plants and to native tribal people.
- Rainforests help to absorb the carbon dioxide from the earth's atmosphere and convert it into clean air for us to breathe.
- A quarter of the world's medicines come from rainforest plants.
- Rainforests are very important for the health of our planet.



# All in a Day's Work

## Kieran Quirke, Forest Manager, Coillte

### PROFILE

Kieran Quirke is a forest manager working for Coillte, the Irish Forestry Board. His work involves the sustainable management of trees and their environment.

Photographs courtesy of Coillte



### Where did your interest in trees come from?

From childhood one of the first books I remember reading was "Robin of Sherwood and his Merry Men". This sparked my imagination and led to role playing with my brothers and sisters in a place called Castlefreke Wood in West Cork. I think it was there I

gained a love for the outdoors and trees in particular.

### What training did you do to get where you are today?

I went to University in Wales where I completed a degree in Forestry. I then worked as a contractor for a number of years in the forestry sector mainly

doing tree measurements and timber volume estimations. I joined Coillte under a graduate recruitment programme and spent some time working in Wicklow, Wexford and am now based here in Castleisland in County Kerry.

### What type of work do you do?

My work is quite varied and mainly involves planning the timber type and quantity to be harvested from the forests to supply the sawmills. I make sure that felled areas are replanted to sustain timber supply into the future and that all our forests are kept clean and visually attractive. I also manage forest

recreation areas, maintain forest walking trails, picnic benches, viewing points etc. Another important part of my job is protecting and enhancing biodiversity areas associated with the forests.

### Is there any rare or unusual wildlife in the forests you manage?

Yes, the Hen Harrier, one of Ireland's and Europe's rarest birds of prey, nests in young forests in the upland areas near Castleisland. I protect this species by minimising any disturbances like harvesting close to nest sites and by maintaining a succession of young forests.

### What is the best thing about your job?

The variety and being able to work both indoors and outdoors. One moment I could be on the office computer and the next I could be fighting a forest fire.

### What is the worst thing about your job?

I hate to see any dumping in the forests. Unfortunately I regularly come across piles of domestic waste, car tyres, sofas, mattresses, washing machines and burnt out cars. I work with litter wardens and the Gardai to try and eliminate this dumping.

### What would you do if you weren't doing what you do?

Boatbuilding..... with wood of course!



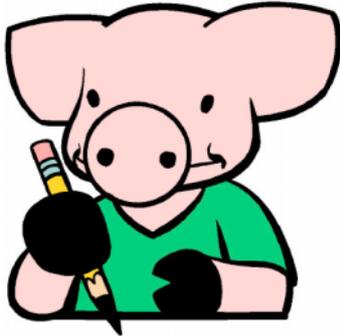
Clockwise from top: Deer in the forest; Cutting timber; Firefighting exercise; The forests of Ireland.



# Picnic in the Forest



# Nature's Web Wordsearch



## Nature's Web Spring 2011 Wordsearch

Try out this giant wordsearch containing words found in this issue of the newsletter.



- BioBlitz
- Coillte
- Common Dolphin
- Hummingbird
- Insect Eyes
- Kieran Quirke
- Met Éireann
- Monty
- Nature
- Octopus
- Orienteering
- Pheasant
- Rainforest
- Seafood
- Snow
- Temperate
- Tropical
- Year of the Forest



SOLUTIONS: (Over, Down, Direction) BioBlitz (11,11,NE); Coillte (17,9,S); Common Dolphin (15,16,NW); Hummingbird (1,16,E); Insect Eyes (18,1,S); Kieran Quirke (14,14,N); Met Éireann (2,1,SE); Monty (5,17,W); Nature (7,1,SW); Octopus (7,10,SE); Orienteering (3,13,NE); Pheasant (11,8,NW); Rainforest (10,4,SW); Seafood (5,15,E); Snow (10,5,NW); Temperate (9,14,W); Tropical (12,8,N); Year of the Forest (15,12,W).

# Learn More

## A Beginner's Guide to Ireland's Wild Flowers

Have you ever wanted to put a name to the wild flowers you see about you every day, or while on a walk, or on holiday? With the help of this pocket-sized guide, you will be able to do just that. Beginners of all ages will be introduced to the many common wild flowers found around Ireland. 206pp

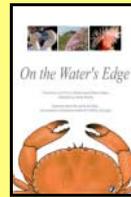


Only €8.50 including postage

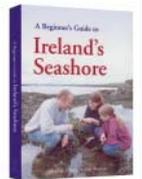
## Sea Life DVD:

### "On the Water's Edge"

Sherkin Island Marine Station has launched a dvd called 'On the Water's Edge'. It is made up of a short film on life beside the sea and is presented by Audrey Murphy. It includes 6-10 hours of interactive material for children of all ages. Available from: Sherkin Island Marine Station, Sherkin Island, Co. Cork. €13.30 including postage.



A Beginner's Guide to Ireland's Seashore is a pocket-sized guide, suitable for beginners of all ages. This book will help you to explore the wonders of marine life found on the shores around Ireland.

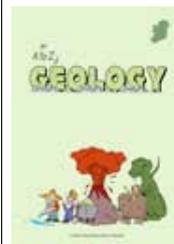


Only €8.00 including postage



Only €2.10 each including postage or €12.00 for all seven! 32pp each

Sherkin Island Marine Station has published a range of colouring books, guides and activity books for children. Each 32-page *Colouring & Guide Book* gives you the chance to colour, identify and learn about the wildlife around Ireland. *My Nature Diary* contains lined pages to fill in a daily record of sightings and nature news.

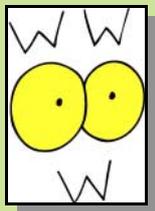


"An A to Z of Geology" explores the fascinating world of rocks and geology - a world of volcanoes, tsunamis, earthquakes, diamonds, gold and even dinosaurs! Produced by Sherkin Island Marine Station, in association with the Geological Survey of Ireland, the book aims to highlight the importance of geology in our everyday lives.

Only €5.99 plus €1.00 postage

To order books, email the order to [sherkinmarine@eircom.net](mailto:sherkinmarine@eircom.net) to receive a Paypal invoice or send your name and address along with a cheque or postal order made payable to Sherkin Island Marine Station to:

Sherkin Island Marine Station, Sherkin Island, Co.Cork, Ireland.



## Useful Web Addresses

There are lots of websites to be found on the internet that will give you further information on topics we have covered in this newsletter. Here are a few that may be of interest:

Met Éireann: [www.met.ie](http://www.met.ie)

Pheasant: <http://www.birdwatchireland.ie/Default.aspx?tabid=309>  
<http://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdguide/name/p/pheasant/>

Octopus: <http://www.marlin.ac.uk/speciesinformation.php?speciesID=3248>

Insect Eyes: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple\\_eye\\_in\\_invertebrates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_eye_in_invertebrates)  
[http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compound\\_eye](http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compound_eye)

Rainforests: <http://www.un.org/en/events/iyof2011/index.shtml>  
<http://kids.mongabay.com/elementary/001.html>  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/habitats/Tropical\\_and\\_subtropical\\_moist\\_broadleaf\\_forests#p0039zg5](http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/habitats/Tropical_and_subtropical_moist_broadleaf_forests#p0039zg5)  
[http://www.primaryscience.ie/activities\\_discover\\_centres\\_table.php](http://www.primaryscience.ie/activities_discover_centres_table.php)

Forests & Coillte: <http://www.un.org/en/events/iyof2011/> [www.coillte.ie](http://www.coillte.ie) [www.coillteoutdoors.ie](http://www.coillteoutdoors.ie) [www.treecouncil.ie](http://www.treecouncil.ie)

Monty the Dog: <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/monty-the-dog-given-pacemaker-for-life-threatening-heart-condition/story-e6frf7kx-1226016826231>

BioBlitz: <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/home-page/irelands-bioblitz/>

Common Dolphins: [http://www.iwdg.ie/species\\_profiles.asp?speciesID=2254](http://www.iwdg.ie/species_profiles.asp?speciesID=2254)

Gordon D'Arcy: <http://www.burrencollege.ie/faculty/gordondarcy.html>

Orienteering: [www.orienteeing.ie](http://www.orienteeing.ie)

We cannot be responsible for the content of external websites, so please observe due care when accessing any site on the internet.



# The World Around Us



"Foreign Correspondent"  
Michael Ludwig reports on some interesting goings on in the natural world.

## For the love of a dog!

Monty, the Bichon fries, had serious heart pump problems but his love for his owners never lessened and neither did theirs. So when the Veterinarian said Monty's heart needed a little help to keep a regular heart beat his owners said "yes" and a pacemaker was installed. A pacemaker is a device which uses electrical impulses to trigger and regulate the heart's beat. Monty problems were unusual because he needed a two chamber pacemaker. The implant is the first of its kind in a dog but Monty and his owners didn't care. And, Monty is again mischievous and up for some fun. He loves playing and is always ready for adventures!



## Take part in a BioBlitz!

In the Spring 2010 issue of Nature's Web we featured Biodiversity (Biological Diversity - the difference between all living things on Earth). To learn a little more about biodiversity you can take part in a BioBlitz, a unique event where scientists, students and the general public can come together and learn how scientists and observers use their skills to study the wildlife of an area. It will also introduce the non-specialist to the fabulous wealth of biodiversity that occurs all around us. BioBlitz is a scientific race against time. It is a fun event to find as many species as possible within a park over a 24 hour period. It begins at 17.00 hrs on 20th May 2011 and finishes at 17.00 hrs on 21st May 2011 at five venues around the country:

- Ballycroy National Park, Co Mayo
- Dromore Woods, Co Clare
- Killarney National Park, Co Kerry
- Raven National Nature Reserve/ Wexford Wildfowl Reserve, Co Wexford
- Waterstone Park, Dublin 7

From soaring eagles to the smallest bugs in the undergrowth, teams of scientists and volunteers will comb the parks recording what they find. Each state-owned property will have a different group vying for the title of BioBlitz 2011 Champions, with each site pitted against one another to see which property can find most species.

Visit <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/home-page/irelands-bioblitz/> for information on last year's event and to get more details about this year's BioBlitz.



## A 1,000 Common Dolphins off Cork Coast

The Irish Whale and Dolphin Group (IWDG) received a report from Mícheál Cottrell (from Baltimore, Co. Cork). He was hauling nets on a commercial fishing boat in mid-February, off the Old Head of Kinsale in Co. Cork, and his skipper shouted to him that a huge pod (herd) of Common Dolphins was "working" (feeding) in the area. There were at least 1,000 dolphins in the pod and they could be seen on the fishing boat's radar. They appeared to cover an area of about 0.75 x 1.5 nautical miles. According to the IWDG, Common Dolphins have a behaviour (practice) of feeding in teams. It appears that they have learned that it is far easier to find food if they co-operate with each other rather than striking off on their own. Cooperation is good!



## Celebrating International Year of the Forest

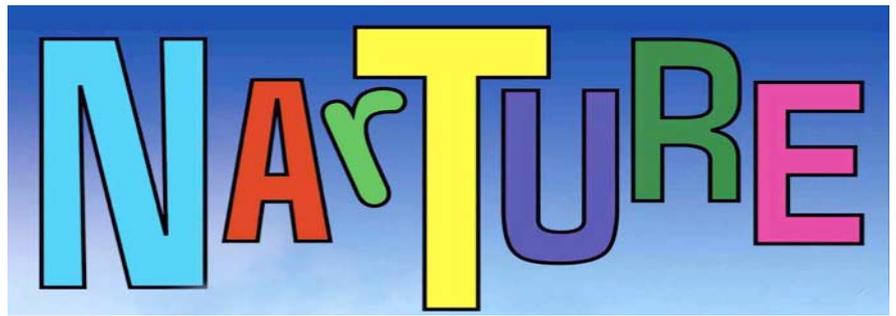
National Tree Week, which is organised by The Tree Council of Ireland, has just celebrated its week-long celebration of trees in our lives and environment. This year the theme of the week was 'The Year of the Forest - Celebrating Forests for People' in keeping with the United Nations' 'International Year of the Forest'. The Tree Council of Ireland tell us that even though Ireland has made great advances in the past 100 years, it is still the least wooded country in Europe. Only 11% of our land is covered in trees, compared to an average of 40% in the rest of Europe. Ireland has agreed to plant more trees so that our forests will cover 17% of the country by 2035. To learn more about woodlands, check out the 'Balrath Project' on [www.treecouncil.ie/schools.html](http://www.treecouncil.ie/schools.html). The Tree Council of Ireland, along with Meath County Council, are developing Balrath woodland in Co. Meath as an 'outdoor classroom'.



# Nature & Art

You can learn a lot about nature by combining nature and art. A new step-by-step guide, designed for primary school teachers, parents and children offers a wide range of educational material to help learn about Ireland's nature. The manual is easy to use and gives lots of information and ideas that can be incorporated into the school year - for all class levels.

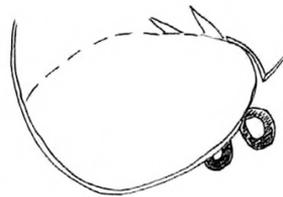
The manual is also great fun. The author, Gordon D'Arcy is a wildlife artist with 25 years of experience and so there are also wonderful tips for drawing animals included. He works with 'Starter Shapes' for each animal, giving the brain the chance to 'see' the entire image before starting and then allowing the children's imagination to 'kick-in'. Here are some sample pages from the manual.



## THE STONE WALL

— Wildlife Habitat

EXERCISE: Construct a stone wall in the classroom



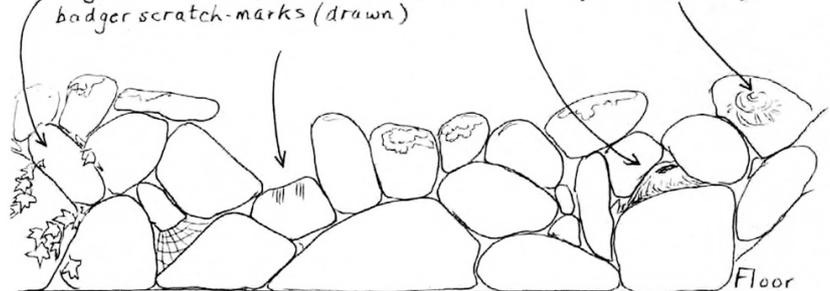
Cut out 'stones' from waste cardboard, 30 or more — all different shapes and sizes

Paint stones (one side only)



Stick stones on to classroom wall or on corridor outside with bluetack or similar removable adhesive. Biggest stones at bottom

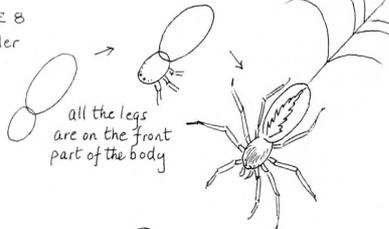
Collect real (well dried) or fabricated material for putting on to the 'stones' of the wall. Examples — Lichen & moss (well dried), spiders' web & spider (fabricated) Ivy, snail, owl pellet (dried), bird's nest, fossil (drawn) badger scratch-marks (drawn)



Courtesy of Gordon D'Arcy

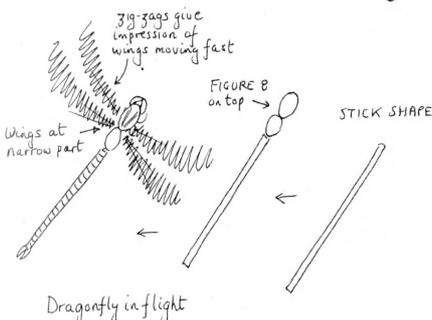
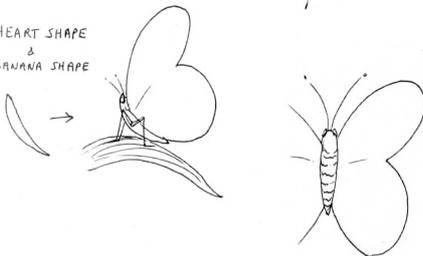
## STARTER SHAPES

FIGURE 8 for spider

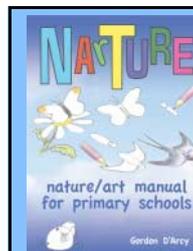


all the legs are on the front part of the body

HEART SHAPE & BANANA SHAPE



Dragonfly in flight



Nature is available from Gordon D'Arcy, Killeenaran, Kilcolgan, County Galway, Ireland. It costs €25.00 per copy (plus €3.50 p&p per copy). For further information contact Gordon D'Arcy directly at [gordondarcy1@eircom.net](mailto:gordondarcy1@eircom.net)

# Fun Page

## How much did you learn?

The answers to all these questions can be found in the newsletter...see if you can remember!

- 1 What was the theme of the Tree Council of Ireland's National Tree Week?
- 2 How many people visit Coillte's forests each year?
- 3 Name the two organs that insects depend on to see.
- 4 What breed of dog is Monty, who was recently fitted with a pacemaker?
- 5 Which fruit is used in BIM's seafood recipe?
- 6 You can learn a lot about nature by combining nature and what?
- 7 How many venues will be holding a BioBlitz in May?
- 8 Which is more colourful, the male or female pheasant?
- 9 Name the first book Kieran Quirke remembers reading?
- 10 What is Ireland's native species of octopus known as?
- 11 Which gets more rainfall, the tropical or temperate rainforests?
- 12 Who saw the large herd of Common Dolphins off the Old Head of Kinsale recently?
- 13 What is the lowest December air temperature ever record in Ireland (on 25th December 2010)?
- 14 Who declared 2011 as International Year of the Forest?
- 15 Gordon D'Arcy is a stone mason. True or false?
- 16 Which rare bird of prey nests in young forests near Castleisland, Co. Kerry?
- 17 What three simple things do you need for orienteering?

Answers: (1) "The Year of the Forest - Celebrating Forests for People"; (2) Over 18 million; (3) Compounds eyes & simple eyes; (4) Bichon Fries; (5) Lemon; (6) Art; (7) Five; (8) Male; (9) "Robin of Sherwood and his Merry Men"; (10) Curled Octopus; (11) Tropical; (12) Micheal Cotrell; (13) -17.5"; (14) The United National General Assembly; (15) False (he is a wildlife artist and author); (16) Hen Harrier; (17) A map, a compass and your brain.

## Think of a Title!

Can you think up a caption for this photograph of a Broad-billed Hummingbird?



Courtesy of ADWilson www.naturespisonline.com

## Nature Jokes



What did the worm say to the other when he was late home?  
Where in earth have you been?

Why do cows wear bells around their necks?  
Because their horns don't work.



Why were the flies playing football in saucers?  
They were playing for the cup.

What does a snail say when it's riding on a turtle's back?  
Weeeeeee!

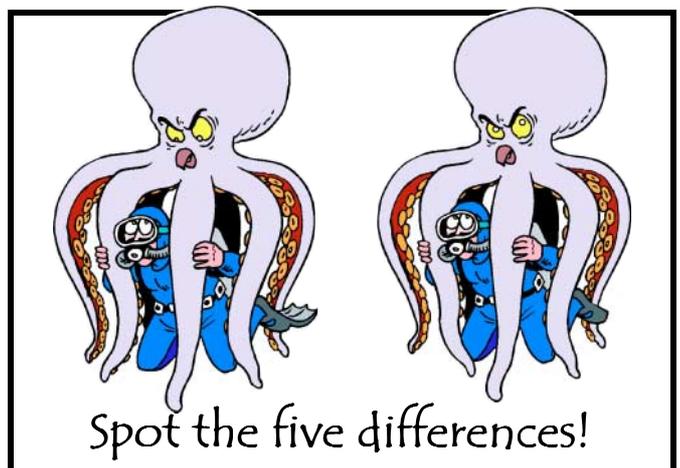


What do you get if you cross an insect and a dance?  
A cricket ball.

Eleven ducks shared one umbrella, yet none got wet. How did they manage?  
It wasn't raining.



What do you get if you cross a parrot with a shark?  
A bird that will talk your ear off.



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## Fun in the Forests

Forests are very important to us.

- They provide us with materials to build, furnish and heat our homes.
- They help to produce the oxygen we breathe.
- They are one of our most important wildlife habitats and provide homes for vast numbers of plant and animal species.
- They prevent air pollution by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
- They stabilise the soil, helping to prevent landslides, and absorb excess ground water, helping to prevent flooding.
- Not only do they do all these things, but they also provide us with beautiful amenities for us to enjoy.



Coillte, Ireland's leading forestry company, welcomes over eighteen million visitors to its forests each year. There are ten forest parks and more than 150 recreation sites which provide lots of opportunities for outdoor recreation. You can enjoy such things as walking, hiking, mountain biking, picnicking, fishing and nature watching.

### Forest activities to get you outdoors

#### Walking & Hiking

All the trails across the country are graded. You choose an easy, moderate or strenuous route and information is also given on the length, expected time, expected climb and whether linear or loop of each trail. You can choose from numerous walks around the country, from the Salt Marsh Trail in Ards Forest Park, Co. Donegal to the Lake Walk in Castlefreke Woodlands, Co. Cork.



#### Cycling

Coillte manages many kilometres of walking and cycle trails which are all listed, along with a downloadable map with details of length and grade.



#### Orienteering

Coillte has a number of permanent orienteering courses in their forests for people to use (see page 15).



### International Year of the Forest 2011

2011 has been declared "International Year of the Forest" by the United Nations General Assembly "to raise awareness on sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests". In other words, that people are made aware of the importance of using and protecting forests in such a way that they will be there for future generations.

### Leave No Trace

For everyone visiting forest, it is important to:

- Leave No Trace
- Plan ahead and prepare
- Be considerate of others
- Respect farm animals and wildlife
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces
- Leave what you find
- Dispose of waste properly
- Minimise the impacts of fire



More information is available on [www.coillteoutdoors.ie](http://www.coillteoutdoors.ie).

### Tips for the Outdoors

Tips when using the forest parks & recreational sites:

- Be weather aware.
- Keep your gear dry on the trail.
- Keep warm with layers.
- Check out the website for a handy map tips and essentials you should bring.



Courtesy of Coillte

# Special Feature

## Orienteering

### What is it?

The Irish Orienteering Association describes orienteering in simple terms as finding your way from one point to another, using only a map, a compass and your brain. Orienteering is usually done in the woods, hills or parks, with the participants on foot.

At a typical organised Orienteering event, several courses of varying difficulty are laid out in the woods by the event organisers. Each course consists of a series of checkpoints (or "controls") marked by a brightly coloured, distinctive Orienteering flag. Participants are given a map with the locations of the checkpoints circled. The starting place, the sequence in which you visit the controls, and the finish location are also shown. Then, using the map and a compass, it's up to the participant to find his or her way from one control point to another in the order specified.

The Irish Orienteering Association welcome beginners. If you would like to try it, check out their website [www.orienteering.ie](http://www.orienteering.ie) for information.



Orienteering is considered a competitive sport by some but for many casual walkers it is a recreational activity. People come out alone, with friends, or with family, admiring the view and taking time to appreciate nature. It can be considered a walk with some mental challenge added.

Courtesy of [www.orienteering.ie](http://www.orienteering.ie)

## Permanent Orienteering Sites in Forests

With the help of local orienteering clubs, Coillte has set up a number of permanent orienteering sites at various forests around the country. Coillte's sites cater for orienteers in the beginners, intermediate and experienced categories and course maps for each category are available for download. These courses are an ideal way of introducing children and adults to orienteering. Go at your own pace and spend as much time as you like figuring out the map and navigating to the controls. Permanent orienteering courses can be used for a more adventurous family stroll, or for training to gain confidence away from the pressure of more organised orienteering competitions.

The forest habitat provides a wonderful opportunity to learn more about nature. To facilitate this, Coillte have developed educational resource material for use at some of their sites: Hellfire Club (Co.

Dublin), Carrickgollogan (Co. Dublin), Farran Forest Park (Co. Cork) and Lough Key Forest Park (Co. Roscommon).



The pages for these sites include the following information:

- Primary and Secondary School Course maps
- a work book, based on the primary science curriculum,
- a more advanced workbook for second level, junior cycle students, and,
- Teachers' Answer Sheets
- Check them out at [www.coillteoutdoors.ie](http://www.coillteoutdoors.ie)



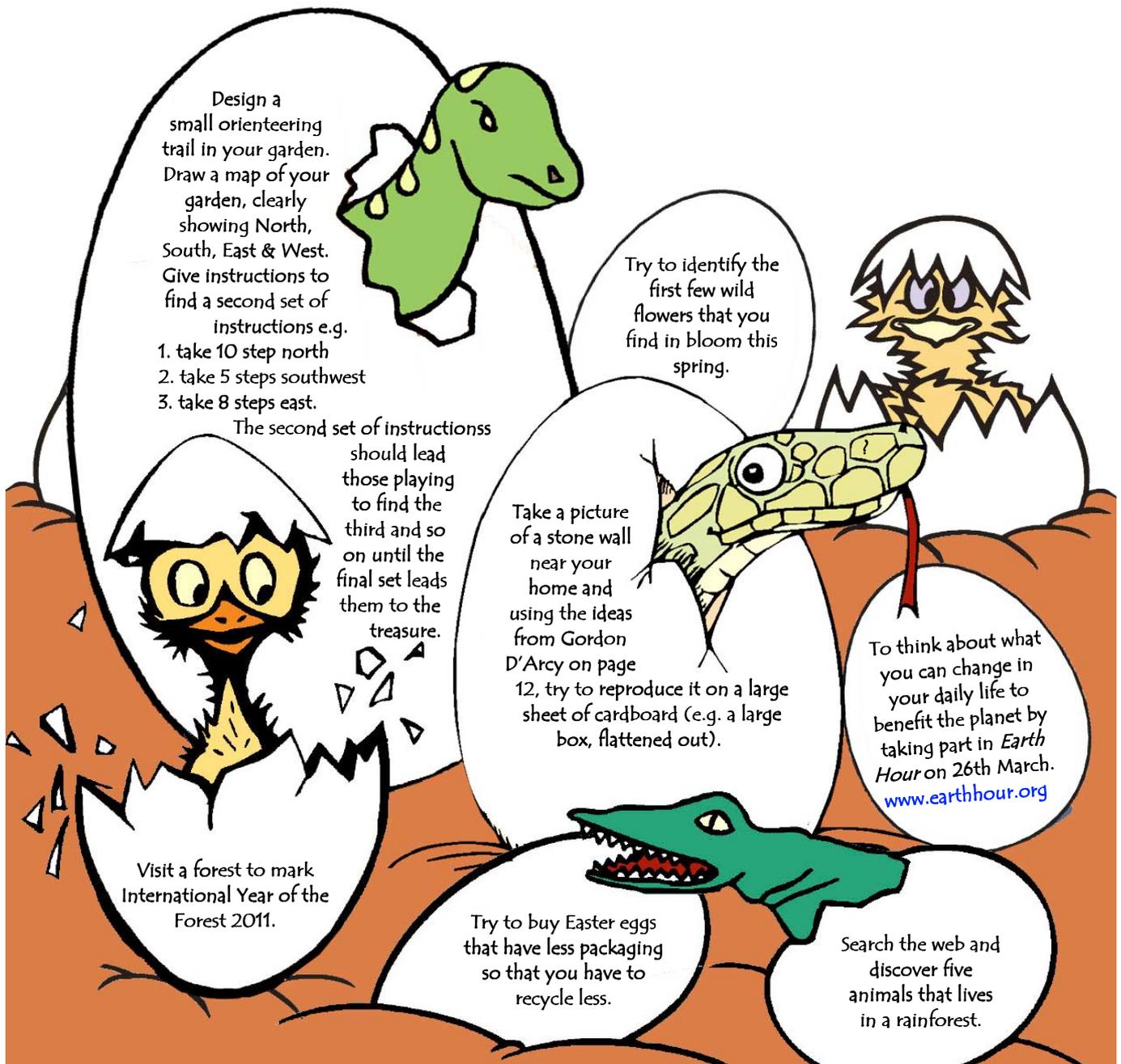
Courtesy of Coillte

Farran Forest Park, Co. Cork, (see map) one of the permanent orienteering sites which Coillte has set up and for which they have developed educational resource material for schools. Check out [www.coillteoutdoors.ie](http://www.coillteoutdoors.ie) for information.

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# Nature's Noticeboard!

## Spring 2011



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