



November

zoom in on mammals

Background information

Mammals evolved about 200 million years ago. They have the following characteristics:

- 1 warm-blooded – normally their body temperature varies between 32°C and 40°C
- 2 usually have hair
- 3 young are fed on milk
- 4 vertebrates
- 5 external ears
- 6 most highly developed brains in the animal kingdom
- 7 4,680 mammal species



Key areas to study

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

Classification

- 1 **Insectivores:** hedgehog, pigmy shrew.
- 2 **Lagomorphs:** hare, rabbit.
- 3 **Rodents:** grey and red squirrel, house mouse, field mouse, wood mouse, bank vole, black rat, brown rat
- 4 **Carnivores:** fox, badger, otter, stoat, pine marten,

feral ferret.

- 5 **Ungulates:** fallow deer, red deer, sika deer, feral goat.
 - 6 **Bats:** Daubenton's bat, common pipistrelle bat, soprano pipistrelle bat, Nathusius' pipistrelle bat, Leisler's bat, Natterer's bat, horseshoe bat, long eared bat, whiskered bat, Brandt's bat.
 - 7 **Cetaceans:** seals, whales and dolphins.
- Vertebrates are divided into five families: birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and fish.

Literacy/Litearthacht

Mammal/Mamach: a warm-blooded vertebrate (veirteabrac aonteach).

Feral/Fia-ainmhí: a once domesticated animal that is now wild (ainmhí clóis tráth agus atá ina ainmhí fiáin anois).

Lagomorphs: gnawing animals such as rabbits with two pairs of upper incisors (ainmhithe a dhéanann cnaí – coiníní, mar shampla, a bhfuil dhá pháire de chlárghiacla acu).

Rodent/Creimire: an animal such as a rat with large incisors for gnawing or nibbling (ainmhí mar fhranchac le clárghiacla

móra don chnaí nó don bhlaisteacht).

Ungulate/Crúbach: a hoofed animal such as a deer (ainmhí a bhfuil crúba faoi mar fhia).

Insectivore/Feithiditeoir: an insect-eating mammal (mamach a itheann feithidí).

Earth/Brocach: a fox's home (baile an tsionnaigh).

Holt/Poll an mhadra uisce: an otter's home (baile an mhadra uisce).

Drey/Nead iora: a squirrel's nest (baile an iora).



Hares

Photo: Sr Anna Ryan

Useful websites and resources

- ✦ www.mammals.org.uk
- ✦ www.biodiversityireland.ie has an Atlas of Mammals in Ireland
- ✦ www.biology.ie
- ✦ www.rte.ie/radio/mooneygoeswild/factsheets/mammals/
- ✦ www.batconservationireland.org
- ✦ www.enfo.ie

- ✦ Ireland's Mammals by Juanita Browne (Browne Books, 2005)

- ✦ Drawing with children on Gordon Darcy's book *Nature*.

See www.gordondarcy.ie for drawing mammal footprints etc.

Helping mammals in November**Make a hibernaculum for hedgehogs:**

Collect the following: a cardboard box, 6 old logs, dry leaves, straw, shredded paper, a black polythene bag, pipe, some branches, 6 old bricks, 4 laths. See www.blackrockec.ie Click on 'Paddy's School Garden' and then on 'November Projects'.

Make or purchase a bat box for hibernation: Position boxes for hibernating bats in a north-facing direction about 3-5m from the ground. They can be purchased from

www.conservationsservices.ie.

Interactive whiteboard: Check www.naturedetectives.org.uk

for activities relating to mammals.

Make a mind map of mammal and vertebrate families following instructions on Tony Buzan's book *Mind Maps for Kids* (Thorsons 2003) or check out <http://members.optusnet.com.au/charles57/Creative/Mindmap/>.

Place names and mammals

Some place names derived from names of mammals.

- ✎ Kanturk from Ceann Toirc - The boar's head.
- ✎ Carricknashannagh from Carraig na Sionnach - The fox's rock.

See www.logainm.ie.

Interesting facts

- ✎ The Duck-Billed Platypus and the Spiny Anteater are the only egg-laying mammals.
- ✎ The Blue Whale is the largest mammal on earth – can weigh 100 tons.
- ✎ The smallest mammal is Kittie's Hog-Nosed Bat which weighs 1.5g.
- ✎ Ireland's smallest mammal is the Pigmy Shrew – weighs 3g in winter.



Hedgehog Hibernaculum

Photo: Eamon Ó Murchú

Active Learning**What land mammals have been in Ireland the longest?**

Give the children laminated cards with pictures and names of the following mammals: red squirrel, stoat, rabbit, hedgehog, wood mouse, grey squirrel, pine marten, brown hare, Irish hare, pigmy shrew, badger, feral ferret, brown rat, hedgehog, fallow deer, red deer, sika deer, fox, otter, field mouse, bank vole, feral goat, mink. To arrive at the correct answer they must make a separate pile of these species that were introduced: mink (recent escapees from captivity), feral ferret, rabbit (by Normans), hedgehog (by Vikings or Normans), grey squirrel (introduced in 1911 to Castle Forbes, Longford), brown rat and black rats (on ships), brown hare (in recent times), fallow deer (by Normans), sika deer (by Lord Powerscourt in 1860), bank vole (1920s), feral goat (by Neolithic farmers), feral ferret (recently), house mouse (by prehistoric man).



Squirrel

Photo: Eamon Ó Murchú

What mammals have become extinct in Ireland?

Give the children laminated pictures with a selection from the above plus pictures of the following: wolf, brown bear, wildcat, wild pig, giant deer, reindeer, lynx and let them decide through talk and discussion.

Join the family game

Make 7 posters with the following written on each: Insectivores, Lagomorphs, Rodents, Carnivores, Ungulates, Bats, Cetaceans. Post them on a wall outside. Distribute the mammal cards. The children have to decide which family they belong to and then move to the correct poster.

Table quiz

Devise a quiz based on mammals.

Strand Units covered this month

Environmental awareness, caring for the environment, plant and animal life, science and the environment, my locality through the ages, the local natural environment.



Hedgehog

Photo: Paddy Madden



Seal

Photo: Eamon Ó Murchú



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* has just been published and 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 aistriuchán.*

Fallow deer