



Investigating Animal Biodiversity in Secondary schools

Try some of the following simple activities to get started exploring the birds and invertebrates in your school grounds or in your local community. Choose from videos, practical actions and educational resources to dig in!

Bird Investigation Activities

Before you go out

- Look at some pictures of common birds [online](#) so you are familiar with their features.
- Identify where you will go bird spotting. Are there any bird feeders around the school? Do you have a local park/woodland nearby or is there a looped walk you can do around the school. Pick out several different areas to include different habitats if possible.
- Listen to different bird calls in the classroom to familiarise students with the various sounds they may hear. You can listen to any bird's song [here](#).

Completing the activities

- Divide students into groups and print out a selection of spotter sheet on next page and some from our additional links below and give one to each group.
- Go on a walk around your school grounds or local area and try to find and identify as many different birds as possible. Photograph or sketch their key characteristics. Note what helped you to identify them.
- Go to a hedgerow or group of trees and try listening out for different bird calls. You may not be able to identify them all but notice how many different calls you hear.

Follow on actions

- Use online sources/books etc to identify any birds you did not know in the field.
- Take part in a [bird surveying project](#) with Birdwatch Ireland.
- Use the information gathered to attract more birds to your grounds. Which common birds are missing? Can you hang feeders/create habitats to attract them.

You will need

- Spotter sheets. Try a selection including our GS one below, [Birdwatch Ireland Sheet](#) and [Wildlife Watch](#)
- Camera/phone/ipad
- Paper and pencil
- Binoculars (optional)

Green Schools Bird Spotter Sheet

Tick every time you see me!



Magpie/Snag breac

☐

Blackbird/Lon Dubh

☐

Robin/Spideóg

☐

Blue tit/Meantán gorm

☐

Wood Pigeon/Colm coille

☐

Herring Gull/Faoileán scadán

☐

Bullfinch/Corcrán coille

☐

Starling/Druid

☐

Invertebrate Investigation Activities

Activity One: Shake a Tree

- To find insects or other invertebrate that are on leaves or twigs on trees and bushes place an old sheet or an upside-down umbrella underneath and gently shake a branch for 10 seconds. See [Video Demonstration](#) for some tips.
- Check and see what insects have fallen onto your sheet or umbrella. Avoid standing or kneeling on the sheet. Spread out and watch for movement.
- Try to identify, photograph or draw any insects you see before placing back in a safe place – at the base of the tree or under the bush.

You will need

- Light coloured sheet or umbrella
- Spotter sheets below and [here](#)
- Camera/phone/ipad
- Paper and pencil

Activity Two: Look under things

- Look for ground and crawling invertebrates in dark and damp hiding places. See [Video demonstration](#).
- Lift up logs, plant pots, piles of leaves or other debris on the ground. Also check under window sills and the lids of compost bins. You may need to be quick as many of these creatures can move fast! You can try to place temporarily in an insect jar, paper cup or large tray.
- Try to identify, photograph or draw anything you see before returning where you found them. Make sure you put back anything you lift up to its correct place.

You will need

- Spotter Sheets below and [here](#)
- Camera/phone/ipad
- Paper and pencil
- White trays/tubs or paper cups for observing insects

Further Links: For a more in depth look either out in the field or back in the classroom with your photos click these links for [ladybirds](#), [butterflies](#), [beetles](#) and [bees](#).

Green Schools Flying Insect Spotter Sheet

Tick every time you see me!



Wasp/Foiche

☐

Butterfly/Feileacán

☐

Bumblebee/Bumbóg

☐

Shield Bug/Frídscéithe

☐

Bluebottle/Cuil ghorm

☐

Ladybird/Bóin Dé

☐

Aphid/Aifid Ghlas

☐

Hoverfly/Beach ghabhair

☐

Green Schools Crawling Invertebrates Spotter Sheet

Tick every time you see me!



Snail/Seilide garraí



Woodlouse/Cláirseach



Worm/Péist talún



Centipede/Céadchosach



Caterpillar/Bolb



Slug/Drúchtín



Ant/Seangán



Earwig/Ceilpeadóir