



Unit 3: Animals

New Words

termites mammal marsupial protected species extinct diurnal nocturnal echolocation



It is great to have a pet to look after. Most pets are cute and cuddly and very loving. However, having a pet is a big responsibility. It needs to be looked after every day, not just when you feel like it. Sadly, some people do not care for their pets properly. Some pets are left hungry or thirsty or they are left outdoors in cold weather. All animals can feel pain. Never be cruel to an animal.

Hot Science

Small, Medium and Large

The aardvark lives in Africa. It is sometimes called the 'earth pig'. Aardvarks love rooting or digging for termites.



Animals come in many shapes and sizes. When we say 'animals', we mean all types of creatures: land animals, fish, birds, insects and so on. The smallest animal in the world is the fairyfly. You could fit around 100 of them on the tip of your fingernail. You will not find one in Ireland; they live on the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe. Scientists are still discovering new animals. Since the book was written, they may have discovered a creature that is smaller than the fairyfly. What do you think they would call it?

The largest animal in the world is the blue whale. Fully grown, it measures around 30 m long. You would not fit one inside your classroom. The largest land animal is the African elephant. Never let one stand on your toes – it weighs around 7000 kg! The largest wild animal in Ireland is the red deer, which can be found in County Kerry.



Blue whale

Hot Science

Even though they are mammals, the platypus and the spiny anteater actually lay eggs.



Spiny anteater

Mammals

Mammals are animals that rear their young on milk. Mammals have blood that is warm (unlike fish and reptiles, which have cold blood). Mammals have fur or hair and their babies can usually move around as soon as they are born (unlike birds, for example, which lay eggs). Humans are mammals and so are dogs, horses, whales and bats. Mammals are clever creatures, especially the dolphin, the chimp and the pig.



Kangaroo and joey

What Is a Marsupial?

Marsupials are mammals that have pouches to carry their babies when they are born. There are no marsupials in Ireland (except in the zoo). Australia is home to many marsupials: kangaroos, koalas, wallabies and possums.

What Is a Protected Species?

Did you know that there were lots of wolves in Ireland until about 200 years ago? What do you think happened to them? Wolves are carnivores (meat eaters) and they hunt in order to live. Many of the forests of Ireland were cleared around 400 years ago to make farmland. Wolves that had lived in the forests began to kill farm animals in order to survive. Farmers were unhappy about this, so they began hunting and killing the wolves. By 1800, there were no wolves left in Ireland. They were extinct. Many other Irish animals could soon become extinct if we are not careful. The Irish government passed a law in 1976 that protects many Irish creatures (as well as 86 types of plant). Those creatures are known as protected species. Most birds and 22 animal species are protected. The following animals are on the list of protected species: bats, deer, red squirrels, frogs, badgers, hedgehogs and hares.



Wolf



Owls are nocturnal creatures

Night and Day

Some animals like to hunt and eat during the day and sleep at night. Those creatures are said to be diurnal. Others, such as the owl and the badger, come out mostly at night to feed. They are said to be nocturnal.



Activities

1. Choose any 10 creatures and write them in order of size. Start with the smallest and finish with the largest.
2. Name 10 animals that you will find only in the zoo and not in the rest of Ireland.
3. How many letters of the alphabet can you match to animals? (For example, aardvark begins with A, badger begins with B, cat begins with C.)
4. The ISPCA is the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Design a poster with a slogan for the ISPCA.



Look after your pet.

It's not cool To be cruel.





Habitat: Woodlands

Many animals live in our woodlands. The trees provide shelter and food and they can protect the animals from hunters (human and non-human). Many animals are shy and hide if they hear loud noises. Others, such as the badger, come out at night to hunt and eat and are not often seen by humans.



Woodlands

Irish Mammals that Live in the Forest

Deer: There are three types of deer in Ireland: the red deer, the fallow deer and the sika deer. Deer are herbivores (eat grass and leaves) and they usually eat



Red deer

in the morning or evening. They also love to eat the bark of young trees. Forest rangers need to protect young trees with wire, because the deer will strip the bark and the tree may die. Farmers have to protect their crops from deer. Deer can jump over high fences to get into fields of turnips and help themselves when the farmer is not looking. The male deer is called a stag or buck and he grows a new set

of antlers every year. The older he is, the bigger his antlers are. The female deer is called a hind or doe. The young deer is a fawn. The meat of the deer (venison) can be eaten. A group of deer is called a herd.

Squirrels: There are two types of squirrel found in Ireland. One is the red squirrel and it is native to Ireland – it has been here for many hundreds of years. In 1911, the grey squirrel was brought here from America. Squirrels are great climbers and they build their nests in trees. The nest is called a drey and it is made of sticks. Squirrels collect nuts in autumn and they store some of them for winter. A male squirrel is called a buck and the female is a doe. A young squirrel is called a kitten. If you come across a group of squirrels, you can say that you have seen a scurry of squirrels.



Red squirrel



Foxes: A male fox is called a dog. The female is a vixen and a young fox is called a cub. A group of foxes is called a skulk and they live in a den or earth. Foxes are omnivores (eat meat and plants). Many foxes are found in the city. Years ago, it was easy for them to find dinner by tearing open a rubbish bag and nosing around to find something tasty. It is much more difficult for them now, because people put their rubbish in plastic bins, which are much harder to break into. Foxes are not liked by farmers because they break into henhouses and kill chickens. You might think that is not so bad, but the fox might kill six chickens while it is there, even though it only wants one!



Fox



UNFORTUNATELY, I DON'T HAVE A SHOPPING BAG, SO I CAN ONLY TAKE ONE CHICKEN AT A TIME.

Why does it do that? Some people think that foxes kill for fun. Others believe that when the fox breaks in, the chickens start to flap and squawk and the fox gets so excited that it kills anything near it.

Bats: There are 10 types of bat living in Ireland: the lesser horseshoe bat and the pipistrelle are two. A young bat is called a pup and a group of bats is called a cloud. The bat is a flying mammal.



Bat

You might have heard the saying, 'as blind as a bat'. People say this because bats use their ears to see at night. Bats make a very high-pitched sound and then listen to the echo. The sooner they hear the sound, the nearer they are to a wall or a tree. This way of 'seeing' with ears is called echolocation. Like your eyes, bats' eyes do not work very well in the dark.

Bats in Ireland are insectivores: they eat insects and can consume thousands in one night. They sleep through December, January, February and most of March.

So, do bats drink blood? Yes, some bats drink blood. They are called vampire bats and there is nothing they like more than a few mouthfuls of fresh blood. The good news is that they are not too fond of human blood. They like the blood of birds, pigs, horses and cows. Anyway, those bats do not live in Ireland. You will find them in Mexico and South America... unless they find you first!



Vampire bat



Hot Science

A pygmy shrew would fit on a teaspoon! It eats most types of insect. If it does not eat every three hours, it will die. It likes to live alone. Fights often start when two of these little fellows meet!



Hot Science

Gardeners love hedgehogs, because they eat garden pests like slugs and snails. Hedgehogs did not always live in Ireland. They were brought here by humans. They were once called 'hedgepigs', because their snouts are like a pig's snout. The Irish word for hedgehog is 'grainneog' which means 'ugly one'.



Activities

A. Match the Group to the Animal.

Set 1		Set 2	
swarm of	• wolves	scurry of	• sheep
murder of	• cows	cloud of	• fish
pack of	• birds	flock of	• monkeys
herd of	• crows	shoal of	• bats
flock of	• bees	troop of	• squirrels

B. Match the Animal to Its Baby.

Set 1		Set 2	
cat	• fawn	bat	• foal
cow	• kitten	horse	• kitten
deer	• cygnet	fox	• joey
butterfly	• calf	squirrel	• cub
swan	• caterpillar	kangaroo	• pup

C. Answer the Questions.

1. What is the largest land animal in Ireland (outside the zoo)?
2. What is meant by 'protected species'?
3. What do the letters 'ISPCA' stand for?
4. Why do many animals live in woodlands?
5. What is an insectivore?
6. What is the name for using your ears to see (like bats do)?

