



Unit 4: Biodiversity

'Biodiversity' is a term used to describe the variety of life. It includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems. Biodiversity is important to our society and economy because it provides food, fuel, fibre and medicines and is also the basis for much of our tourism and recreation industries. Biodiversity also plays a part in a wide variety of essential ecosystem services such as carbon cycling and storage, nutrient cycling and maintenance of soil fertility. Ireland is renowned for its outstanding natural beauty including some habitats and wildlife species that are scarce across Europe. While some species are doing well, a number of native Irish species and their habitats are under threat from factors like intensification of agriculture, drainage of wetlands and climate change.

Outcomes

Students will:

- Understand how important our natural resources are for the local community, for the economy, amenity, tourism and conservation.
- Understand that sometimes different uses can conflict (e.g. visitors to an area can damage delicate habitats, animals or plants).
- Become aware of the various stakeholders (visitors, local business, local community and the state) that have a role in protecting our natural heritage.

Eco Eye Clip and Comprehension

(NB remember to print and prepare these in advance).

Protecting the Burren

This clip looks at how local groups in the Burren have come together to balance the use of this area of natural beauty for tourism and for conservation of the geology and ecology.





Biodiversity in our bogs

Duncan visits Lough Boora Park to hear about how the bog which used to provide peat has now been restored as a haven for wildlife.

Biodiversity in our seas

The rich marine wildlife of the South West is explored in this clip which features whales, dolphins and seals. Tourism is an important part of the economy in the area and Duncan looks at eco friendly ways for visitors to learn about and enjoy the area.

Biodiversity in our forests

Duncan visits a forest to look at the species of birds, insects and plants there, including endangered species like the Hen harrier. We hear about the threats to our biodiversity for example, how introduced species like the Grey squirrel can be a threat to native species like the Red squirrel. It is important to consider biodiversity when managing planted forests.

Watch the clips (choose some or all) and complete the comprehension exercises.

Activities

- Look for information on protected sites in your area and find out why they are protected. At www.npws.ie you can look for Nature Reserves, National Parks and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).
- Find out the facts about a vulnerable or rare species of native Irish animal or plant that is endangered and why - report to the class. What are the most common threats to our biodiversity? For more information go to www.epa.ie, www.biodiversityireland.ie or www.npws.ie.
- What is being done in your local area to protect biodiversity? Research the National Biodiversity plan and the Biodiversity Plan for you county.
- Visit a Nature Reserve or a National Park.





- The National Biodiversity Data Centre in Waterford website www.biodiversityireland.ie has interactive maps of protected sites and species and a lot of current information on biodiversity. Research your local area.
- Invite a speaker from a local conservation group like Birdwatch Ireland or the Biodiversity or Heritage Officer from your Local Authority to talk to you on biodiversity. For a list of officers see <http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/county-heritage-services/contacts/biodiversity-officers/>.
- Ask for advice on biodiversity in your school - You can support wildlife by planting native trees and plants, to attract more birds, insects and animals into your school grounds.

Useful websites

- www.birdwatchireland.ie
- www.crann.ie
- www.batconservationireland.org
- www.cvi.ie
- www.askaboutireland.ie

