

LEAF Activity

WEB OF LIFE ACTIVITY



Suitable for
AGES 8+



Materials

1 ball of string (at least 20m long)

Activity Cards: each being the name or image of an element in an eco-system. For a woodland ecosystem in Ireland that could include the following: oak tree, frog, heron, otter, fish, spider, bee, fly, beetle, bat, bluebell, squirrel, river, soil, rain.

 An Taisce



LEAF Activity

WEB OF LIFE

Directions

Participants stand in a circle, facing inwards.

Each participant is given a Card to hold.

One participant (e.g. the 'oak tree') holds the end of the string, then hands the ball to another participant (e.g. the 'spider') while making a statement about the relationship between the two things, e.g. "the oak tree provides shelter in its branches for the spider to weave its web".

Next, the 'spider' passes the ball to a third participant, e.g. 'the fly' whilst still holding onto a section of the string, again making a statement about their relationship in nature, e.g. "the spider gets its energy by eating the fly".

Now two participants are holding the string, whilst the third participant is holding the ball of string.

The activity continues like this, with the ball being passed back and forth, but each participant holds onto a piece of the string, after they have made a statement.

Some elements e.g. the soil, or the oak tree, may end up having multiple relationships and connections. In this case, the participant will be holding the string in 3 or 4 different places.

Soon a web of string will have been created; The Web of Life!

NB: everybody needs to hold the string taut!

Variations/Extensions

Ask participants some questions to explore the topic further, e.g. "What does the string look like now?" "What does this tell us about connections in nature?" The facilitator can gently push the centre of 'the web' to demonstrate how strong the web is.

To demonstrate that 'the web' can be disrupted, you can remove one key element of the web, e.g. "the river gets polluted" or "the oak tree gets chopped down"; the participant with that sticker or picture then drops all of the string that they are holding. The web is no longer strong; it is weak with loose thread; discuss this with the group; ask them to talk about the consequences this will have on all elements of the web.



 An Taisce



Facts...

I am a flying mammal

I live in old houses or caves nearby forests

I use echolocation to hunt my prey

I eat beetles, spiders & flies

I am eaten by (predators) domestic cats and
bigger birds such as sparrow hawk



Bat (e.g. Lesser horseshoe)
Native rare and endangered



Heron

 An Taisce





Heron (e.g. Grey Heron)
Native and common

Facts...

I am a Bird

I live at wetlands, estuaries and along the rivers

My house is a nest made of twigs and grass and is located on the tree

My eggs and young may become prey for mammals such as otter, fox or pine marten, and even bigger birds

I eat fish, frogs, small mammals, and insects



Salmon

 An Taisce

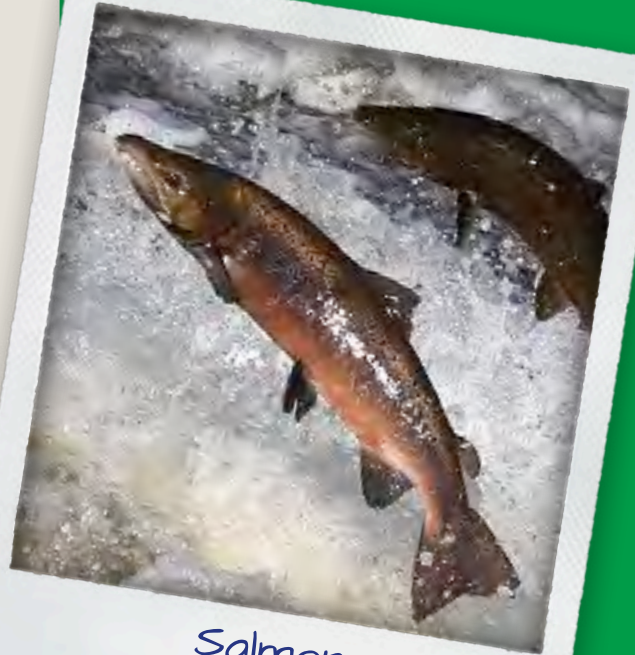


Facts...

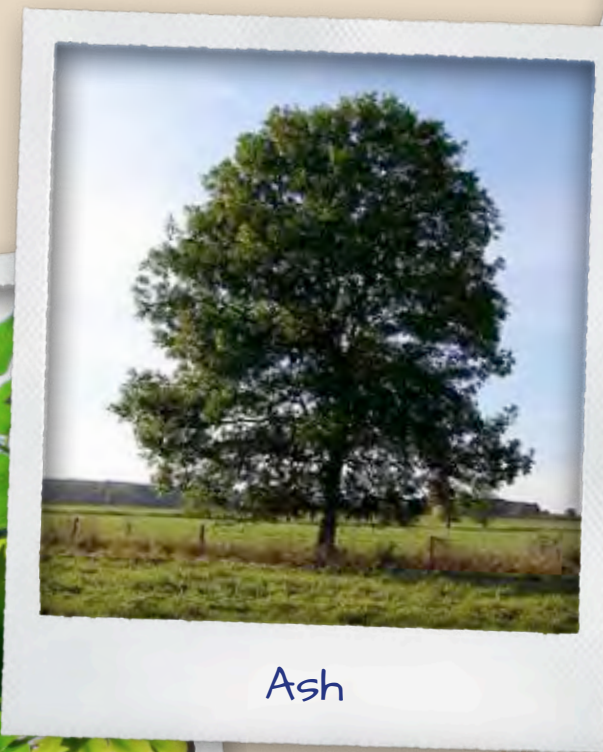
When I am young I live in the river and then in the Atlantic Ocean to mature.

I eat larvae, insects, worms, shellfish and other fish

I am eaten by other fish or birds such as Heron



Salmon
Native and endangered



Ash



 An Taisce





Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*)
Common and native

Facts...

Ireland's tallest deciduous tree

My seeds grow in a bunch and are commonly known as the 'key bunch', they are a favourite snack for squirrels, birds and mice

I produce timber that is strong and flexible so it is used for furniture making and also for items such as walking sticks, snooker cues and hurls



Otter

 An Taisce



Facts...

I am a nocturnal, carnivorous mammal

I live in a holt. My favourite home will be by any water environment, nearby a forest

I eat fish such as salmon, eel, frogs, crab and also some birds

The destruction of my habitat through human disturbance and low water quality are a threat to the Irish otter population



Otter (Eurasian Otter)
Native and protected



Holly

 An Taisce





European Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)
Native and protected

Facts...

I am a small evergreen tree

Separate male and female trees, only female trees have berries

My berries are a food source for many birds

I provide shelter from predators throughout the year, because of evergreen spiky leaves

People praise me as a very special tree, there are many superstitions connected to me



Spider

 An Taisce





Spider

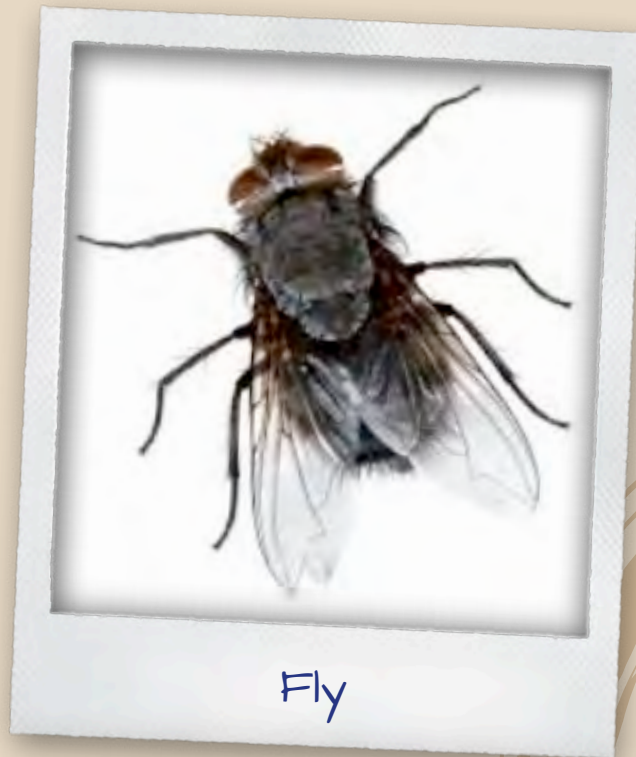
Facts...

I produce a special kind of silk to build my web and catch my prey

I can live almost anywhere

I eat insects such as fly, wasps or bee and other smaller spiders

I am eaten by birds and frogs



Fly

 An Taisce



Facts...

I like to eat everything!

I am eaten by birds, frogs, spiders and small mammals



Fly



Soil

 An Taisce



Facts...

I am a living system, there are more microorganisms in a handful of soil than there are people on earth

I act as an underground water filter

I store carbon dioxide (app. 10%)

I am a great source of nutrients for plants

Soil composition is 50% air and water and 50% minerals and organic matter



Soil



Woodlouse

 An Taisce



Facts...

I eat dead or decaying plant matter - I am an 'ultimate recycler!'

I live in dark, humid places

I am eaten by birds, small mammals or spiders



Woodlouse



Squirrel

 An Taisce





Squirrel (Red Squirrel)
Native and protected

Facts...

I am an Omnivorous rodent

My home is a drey, which is a nest made of twigs located on the tree

I eat very ripe acorns, pine cones, and hazelnuts

I am eaten by bigger birds (e.g. Owls) foxes and pine martins

I am threatened by the introduced grey squirrels, that eat the acorns before I am able to digest them (unripe)



Pine Martin

 An Taisce





Pine Martin
Native and protected

Facts...

I am a nocturnal mammal

I am rare

I like to live in woodlands

I was hunted for fur and almost became extinct

I am eaten by eagles and foxes

I am omnivorous, I eat plants and animals such as squirrels, frogs, beetles, earthworms, berries and mushrooms



Robin

 An Taisce



Facts...

I am territorial and will attack other birds (also same species) in order to protect my area

I am eaten by other bigger birds and small mammals, such as pine marten

I am omnivorous, I eat plants and animals such as insects and berries

My nest is built in a well-concealed hollow in a wall or bank



Robin
Common, also known as redbreast



Bluebell

 An Taisce





Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) Native and protected

Facts...

I am a bulbous perennial plant

My flower looks like a bell

My flowers in the spring create a purple carpet in the woods

My nectar is nutritious for bees, butterflies and other insects



Beetle

 An Taisce



Facts...

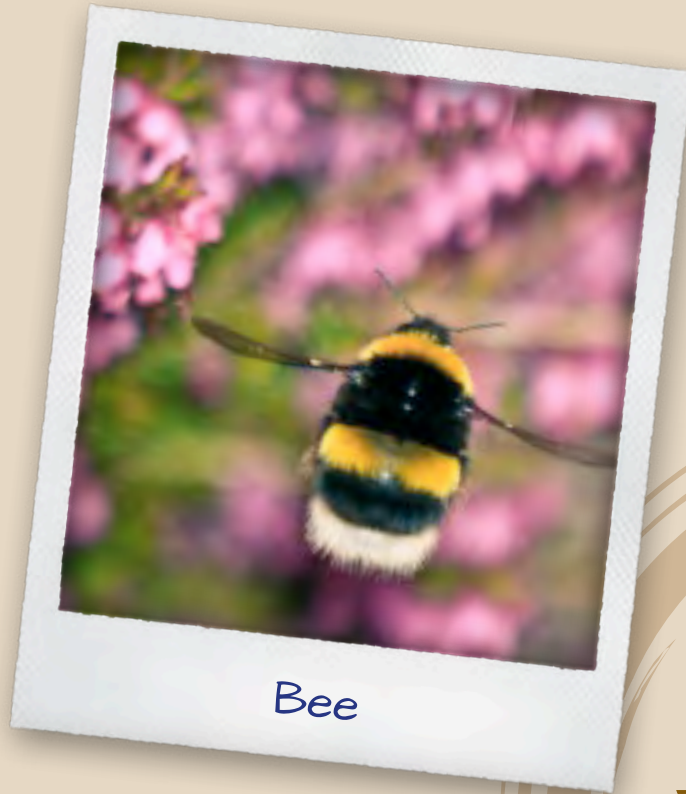
I can live almost anywhere

I am eaten by wasps, spiders, mice, birds (e.g. robin)

I like to eat plant parts such as leaves, seeds or fruits, or fungus and dung, and sometimes smaller insects



Beetle (Coleoptera)
Native and common



Bee

 An Taisce





Bee There are 97 bee species in Ireland Some species of bees are common some are endangered

Facts...

I am super important, I am a pollinator!

I live in a hive, in the hollow of a tree, or in a manmade beehive

I am eaten by birds and some mammals and wasps



Wren

 An Taisce



Facts...

I live in a nest in the hollow of a tree or in a nesting box

I eat insects such as beetles, flies and spiders

I am eaten by mammals such as Pine Marten or Red Fox



Wren
Common resident throughout Ireland



 An Taisce





Chaffinch
Common resident in Ireland

Facts...

My nest is made out of moss and dried grass - often camouflaged with lichens and cobwebs

I am eaten by bigger birds and mammals such as squirrels

I like to eat mainly seeds, split grain or beechnuts

My young feed on insects



Rain

 An Taisce



Facts...

I fall from the clouds in the form of droplets, depending on the temperature I reach the earth as rain, hail, sleet or snow. This is called precipitation

I can help generate electricity through hydropower



Rain
Water is a necessity of life



River

 An Taisce





Facts...

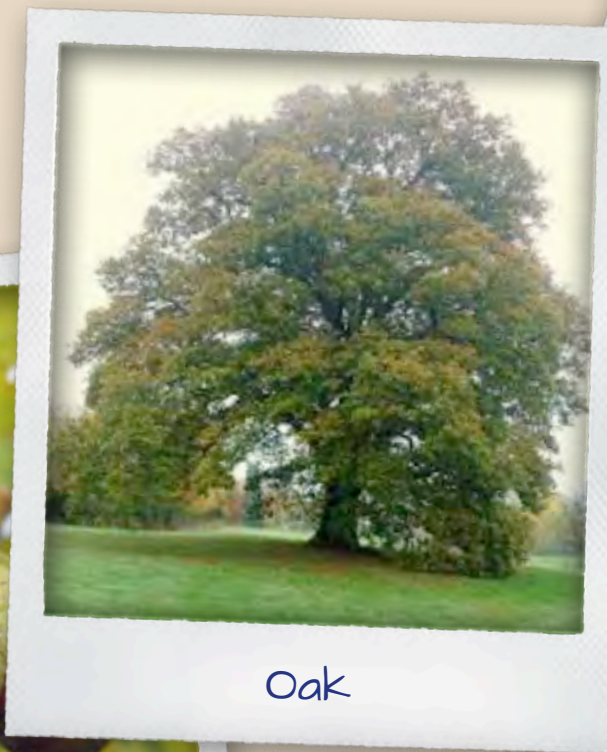
I am a natural flowing watercourse that moves towards the ocean, sea, lake or other river

Smaller rivers are called streams, creeks or brooks

Sometimes I flow underground beneath the surface

World's longest river is the Nile, 6,650km

Ireland's longest river is the Shannon 360.5km



Oak



 An Taisce



Facts...

I am known as the 'King of the Forest'

I provide a habitat for over 400 different species

I produce nuts called acorns, which are eaten by squirrels and other animals

You can find Pedunculate Oak and Sessile Oak in Ireland - sessile means that the acorns have no stalk and pedunculate oak hang from long stalks



oak



Snowdrop

 An Taisce





Facts...

I appear in the spring

I prefer to grow in shady woodland areas, near streams or other damp areas

My flowers and blubs are poisonous if eaten by humans



Frog

 An Taisce



Facts...

I am an amphibian and like to live on land and in the water

I hibernate during winter

My young are called tadpoles and feed on algae and small aquatic insects

I eat slugs and insects such as flies, mosquitos, moths and dragonflies

I use my sticky tongue to catch my prey

I am eaten by otters, foxes and herons



Frog (*Rana temporaria*).
Native and protected



Human 1

 An Taisce





Human 1

Facts...

I am cutting down trees for paper production and not replanting

Some human activities can be destructive.
Can you think of ways we could change?



Human 2

 An Taisce



Facts...

I am polluting the rivers and making it difficult for species to live in them

Some human activities can be destructive.
Can you think of ways we could change?



Human 2



Human 3

 An Taisce





Human 3

Facts...

I am planting trees in my local area and taking part in community clean ups

Some human activities can be constructive.
Can you think of any ways we can help?