

The Rattlin' Bog

What is a bog?



Bogs are places where plants grow in wet ground. If you walked through one, your feet would get very soggy! They have a type of soil called **peat**, which is made when layers of dead plants squash down on top of each other over hundreds of years.

Ireland's bogs are a rattlin' home for wildlife – **rattlin'** is an Irish word for great or brilliant! Read on to learn about a few of the amazing plants and animals that live there.



Irish Hare

During the summer, the Irish hare's brown fur helps it blend in with plants in the bog. But in the winter, its fur turns white so that it can hide in the snow. This clever camouflage makes it harder for foxes and other **predators** (animals that eat other animals) to catch and eat it.

How do bogs help us?

Bogs help to fight **climate change**. Today, the weather all over the world is getting warmer because humans are burning fuels that fill the sky with gases like carbon dioxide. These gases create a layer around Earth that lets the sun's warmth in, but doesn't let it out. This changing weather, or **climate**, harms wildlife and makes it harder for people to grow food. Thankfully, plants that live in bogs take in carbon dioxide from the air and trap it underground when they die, which slows down climate change. If we look after our bogs, then they'll look after us!



Sundew

The sundew plant can eat insects! Its leaves are covered in tiny hairs that have drops of sticky liquid on the ends. When an insect lands on a leaf, it gets stuck to the hairs. The leaf then curls up, trapping the insect inside, and the sundew digests it just like we digest food in our stomachs!



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Sphagnum Moss

Soft, springy sphagnum moss grows like a living carpet all over the bog. Because it soaks up rain water like a sponge, it helps the bog to stay damp and to spread out even further.

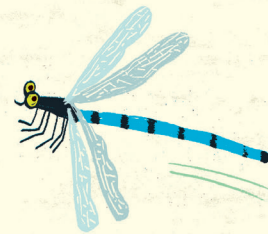


Common Lizard

The common lizard is Ireland's only reptile. Unlike most reptiles, it doesn't lay eggs, but instead gives birth to live baby lizards. If a predator catches a common lizard by the tail, it has a surprising way to escape: its tail snaps off and it grows a new one!

Dragonfly

A bog is the perfect place for a dragonfly to live, because it spends most of its life underwater in a wingless form called a **nymph**. Then after a few years, it climbs up a plant stalk into the fresh air and sheds its skin. Underneath, it has a pair of folded wings. It spreads them and flies away!



What's beneath a bog?

Ireland's bogs aren't only home to a wide variety of plants and animals. Many treasures dating back thousands of years have been found preserved in the moss, including chalices, gold, swords, medieval texts, and even very old butter! Did you see any hidden treasures in the pages of this book?



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How does an egg become a bird?

Inside the egg, a chick has everything it needs. The hard outer shell protects it. The yolk contains food to help it grow. The egg even has a pocket of air for the chick to breathe.

Bird eggs are oval-shaped rather than round, which stops them from rolling out of the nest as easily. When it's time to hatch, some kinds of chicks chirp to each other from inside the egg so that they all hatch at the same time and get the same amount of care from their parents. Some have an "egg tooth" — a sharp bump on the end of their beak which helps them to smash through the shell.



Being a bird parent is hard work. Parents need to sit on their eggs and keep them warm. Then, when their eggs hatch, they need to rush back and forth with a constant supply of worms and insects to feed the hungry, growing, noisy babies. They also need to protect their families — sometimes they have to fight off predators.

But all this work is worth it when the chicks are big enough to fly away and start families of their own!



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How does a seed become a tree?

Seeds have a lot in common with eggs! They have a hard shell on the outside and food on the inside. But unlike eggs, seeds can stay **dormant** (not growing) in the ground for a very long time.



Many seeds start to grow when spring arrives and they sense heat and moisture. Their roots break out and grow downwards in search of water, and their shoots grow upwards towards the sunlight.

Once it's above ground, the shoot grows leaves that soak up energy from the sun, while the roots take in water and nutrients from the soil. That's all a seed needs to grow into a big, strong tree!



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$\text{♩} = 120$

G C G D G C G D G

Hey, ho, the rat-tlin' bog, the bog down in the val-ley - o, Hey, ho, the rat-tlin' bog, the bog down in the val-ley - o!

5 G

And on that tree, there was a branch — a rare branch, a rat-tlin' branch, with the

8 G D G

branch on the tree, and the tree in the bog, and the bog down in the val - ley - o.

Score by Will Stackpole

For my parents, who filled my world with folk music — J. L.

To the Irish Peatland Conservation Council, who strive to protect all the bogs of Ireland — B. F.

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your audio singalong and video animation online.



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