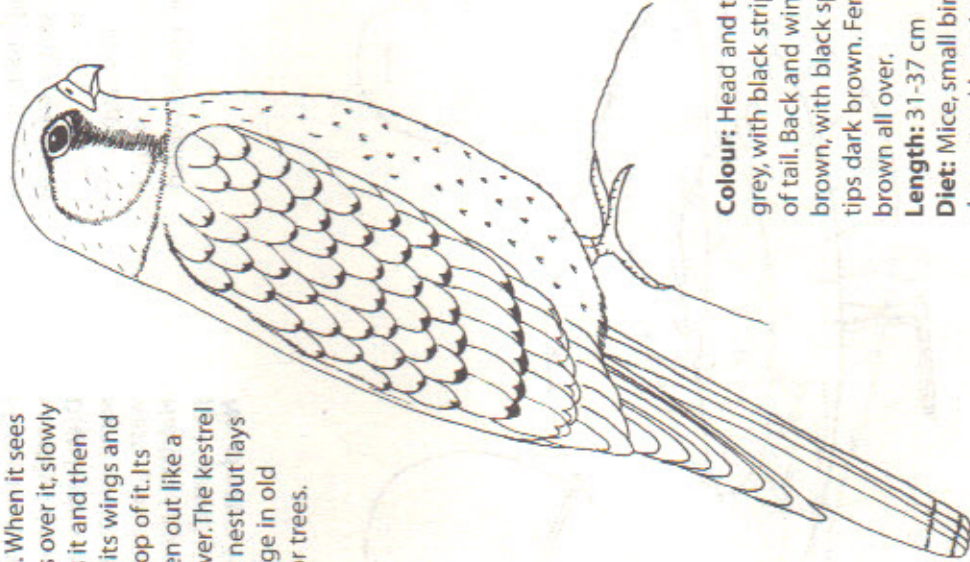


Kestrel

Falco tinnunculus
Pocaire gaoithe

The kestrel is a bird of prey. It can usually be seen hovering, looking for food. When it sees its prey it hovers over it, slowly moving towards it and then suddenly closes its wings and dives down on top of it. Its long tail can open out like a fan to help it hover. The kestrel does not build a nest but lays its eggs on a ledge in old buildings, cliffs or trees.



Colour: Head and tail blue-grey, with black stripe on end of tail. Back and wings reddish-brown, with black spots. Wing tips dark brown. Females brown all over.

Length: 31-37 cm

Diet: Mice, small birds, voles, shrews and large insects.

Habitat: Over roadsides, mountain areas, cliffs, bogs and towns.

No. of eggs: 3-5



Pheasant

Phasianus colchicus
Piasún

Pheasants spend the day on the ground searching for roots, berries, seeds, leaves and insects. The female will usually build a nest out of leaves and grass on the ground, but sometimes it will roost on trees where it would be safe from foxes. Her brown colour helps her camouflage when she is on her nest. Pheasants originally came from China, they were brought here over 900 years ago.

Colour: Female is brown, male has reddish-brown plumage with black bars on feathers. His head is a shiny green, black and violet colour and has red around the eyes. Also has white collar around the neck.

Length: 70-90 cm

Diet: Roots, berries, seeds, leaves and insects.

Habitat: Woodlands, marshes, hilly areas, rough land and tillage farmland.

No. of eggs: 8-15

Ladybird

Latin name – *Coccinella 7-punctata*

Irish name – *Bóinn Dé*



Ladybirds are very common and recognisable insects. They belong to the beetle group and have the smooth curved shiny back that is typical of beetles. This curved back is made of two hardened wing covers which open to reveal two transparent wings with which the ladybird can fly.

There are eighteen different species of ladybird in Ireland. Some of them are red with black spots such as the seven spot and the much smaller two spot. But we also have yellow ladybirds with black spots, red ladybirds with cream spots and even a pink ladybird with black and yellow-ringed spots. They are all brightly coloured and all are poisonous – to birds that is. All ladybirds are brightly coloured to warn birds not to eat them. They contain formic acid so that if an inexperienced bird were to eat one its tongue would be burnt and it would never eat another one. So the bright colour acts as a warning. In fact, if you catch one and let it walk on your hand it might secrete some of this orange-coloured liquid which – if you were a bird – would burn your tongue and you would spit it out. This is another defence stratagem.

Ladybirds themselves are carnivores and they eat greenflies. They visit gardens where there are roses, in order to feast on the greenflies that are sucking the juices out of the tender rose leaves. In the winter when there are no greenfly to eat, ladybirds will hibernate. You could make a “hotel” for them in the school garden by tying together a bundle of hollow bamboo sticks and leaving them on their side on a shelf or something above the ground. The ladybirds could climb in here and have a safe place over winter.

To do with Junior Infants

- Learn the rhyme:

Ladybird, ladybird fly away home

Your house is on fire, your children are gone

All except one and that's little Anne

And she crept under the frying pan.

- Bring the children out to look for ladybirds at the end of May, in June and in September. Places such as rose beds, hedges, low shrubs are all good places to look. You could also shake the branches of a tree into an upturned umbrella and see if any fall down into it.

