

BIODIVERSITY TRAIL



OPW

Óigín na hOibreachtas Poblí
Office of Public Works

Biodiversity is the enormous variety of life on earth, from the tiniest bacteria and insects to massive trees and giant animals like elephants and whales!

5: ROWAN

We aren't the only ones who benefit from the work of the bees. Rowan trees, also called mountain ash, produce berries in late summer and autumn - which birds love to eat! But bees aren't the only pollinators at work, can you see any others?

4: PINES

Look up, can you see the pine cones growing above your head? These cones are actually like suitcases for seeds of the tree. When the cone is ripe it opens and the tiny seeds are blown far away from the mother tree. Cones are also a favourite food of the squirrels who love to chew on the seeds.

3: BEE HIVES



Did you know that bees visit thousands of flowers every day to drink nectar and then return to their hives to make honey? When a bee visits a plant they also carry tiny pollen grains from flower to flower. This leads to pollination and helps the plants to make seeds and fruit, which we like to eat. Now have a peek inside the glasshouse and see if you can spot any peaches and nectarines. If there were no bees and other pollinators what would happen?



6: THE POND

Many insects, birds, mammals and plants live in or around the pond. Now is your chance to be a nature detective! Look at all the living things around you.

Keep an eye out for the beautiful black and blue damselfly - make sure to stay back from the water's edge! List how many different types of birds and insect you can see.

7: GIANT RHUBARB

Stand under the umbrella-sized leaves of this plant! It is called *Gunnera manicata* and sometimes people call it 'dinosaur food' although there is actually no evidence that dinosaurs did actually feast on them!

These plants don't normally grow in Ireland and have no predators. They grow very quickly and can become invaders, changing the environment they live in and blocking out native plants. Look at the stem and nasty thorns. Why do you think some plants have thorns?

8: LICHENS

Can you see grey and orange patches on the trunk of the trees along here?

They are called lichens: small communities of fungi, tiny plants called algae, and sometimes bacteria, which live together and help each other survive. They live in lots of places including rocks by the seashore and even in the frozen arctic.

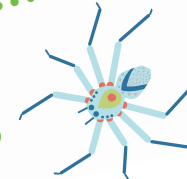
9: GIANT REDWOOD

The Giant Redwood (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) is the largest tree on Earth! It also lives for a very long time - how long do you think a single tree can live?



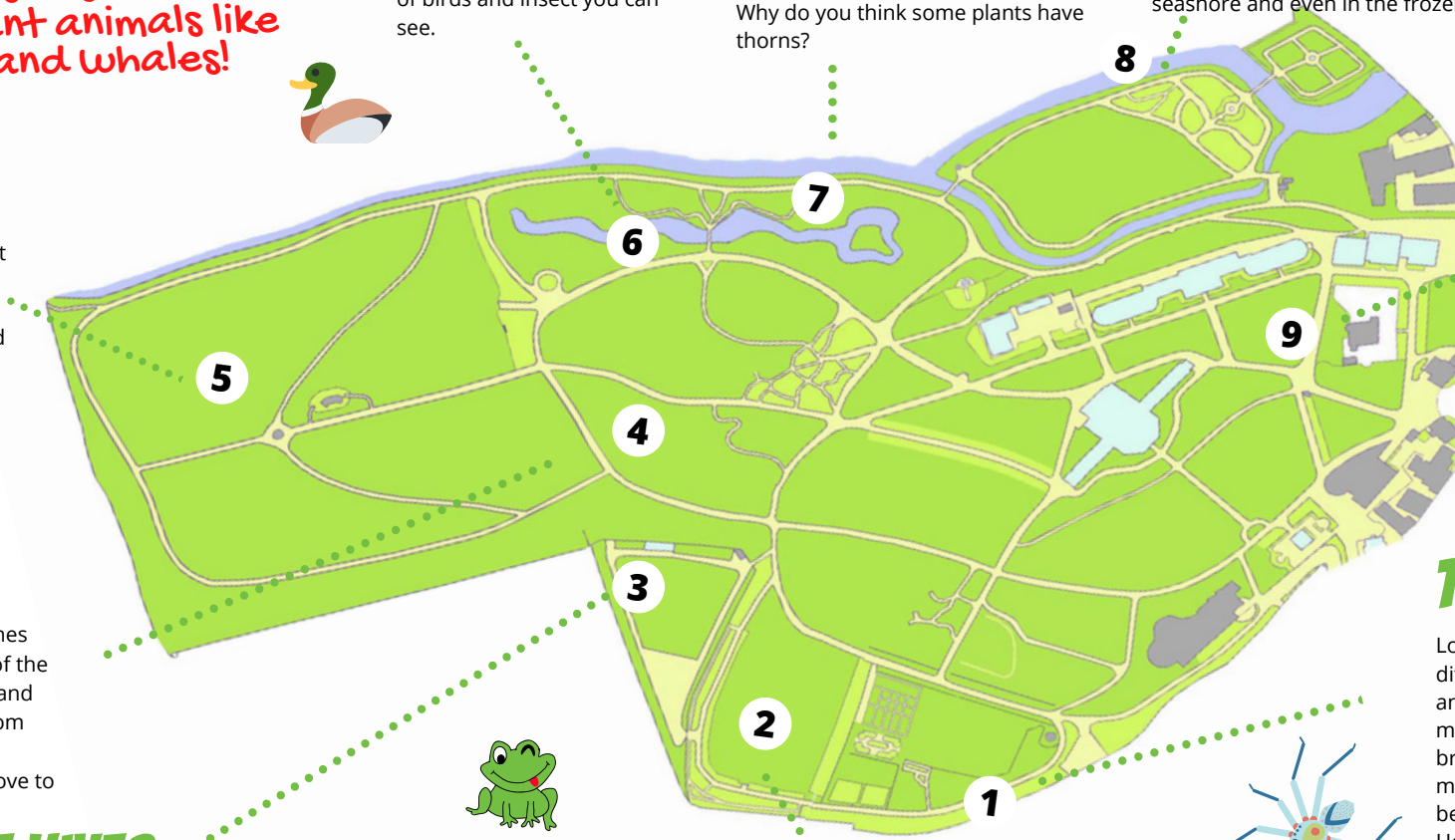
1: LOG PILE

Log piles provide shelter for lots of different animals such as hedgehogs and frogs. There are also lots of minibeasts that do great jobs for us breaking down dead plants and making them into fertile soil, such as beetles, millipedes, centipedes. How could you make sure your own garden has shelter for these creatures?



2: THE OAKS

The Oak is Ireland's national tree and it can support over 200 different species of insects, birds, mammals, plants and fungi - very important for biodiversity! How many different species can you see?



SOME ANSWERS

- 1 Leaving wild areas in your garden can provide homes for lots of animals. Long grass creates homes for solitary bees, log piles for minibeasts, ponds for frogs. You could also get creative and make your own bee hotel!
- 3 If there were no bees, we would get no fruit. In fact, as the bees can't find their way into the glasshouse the gardener has to pollinate the peach trees herself with a tiny paintbrush!
- 5 While bees are our busiest pollinator, other insects such as butterflies, hoverflies, wasps and flies pollinate our plants. In other places, animals such as hummingbirds (South America) and bats (Australia) pollinate plants!
- 7 plants have thorns to protect them from being eaten by animals like the Triceratops!
- 9 The oldest known giant redwood is 3,200–3,266 years old.

my Findings

- 2 How many other species did you see on the oak?

- 6 What animals did you see at the pond?
