

Hello and welcome to the Crannóg Club.
By the time this lands at your door, our gardens, woodlands and favourite country walks will be bursting with growth and new life. Did you have a go at planting any fruit and vegetables? We hope you did, and that it was a great success. DALE and DEC have some more projects for you!

Big Tree Diary

Keep tabs on nature

It was quite a slow start to the year, wasn't it? And now it's really exploded into life. Our gardens (one in Kildare, one in Meath) have really taken off after the long, cold Spring. Have you been keeping some nature notes? Certainly around here, it looks like a bumper year for Horse Chestnut; the trees are full of 'candles'; the floral spikes that will turn into conkers in Autumn. And indeed, tree growth is subject to the seasons just like most other species, and some years will produce a bigger 'harvest' than others, whether this is nuts from a beech (called 'mast'), helicopters from a sycamore, or acorns from an oak.

How did you get on with your bird boxes? And your veggie gardens? The success of online programmes such as Nestwatch on RTE have made birdwatching and nestwatching in particular very popular. Most common garden bird species will have had their broods, and these chicks will have fledged and left the nest. Plenty of time to prepare for next season. So don't leave it too late to get those bird boxes built and into place.



Conkers from the Horse Chestnut. Watch them grow from flowers

Amach Leat

Get out there and DO SOMETHING!

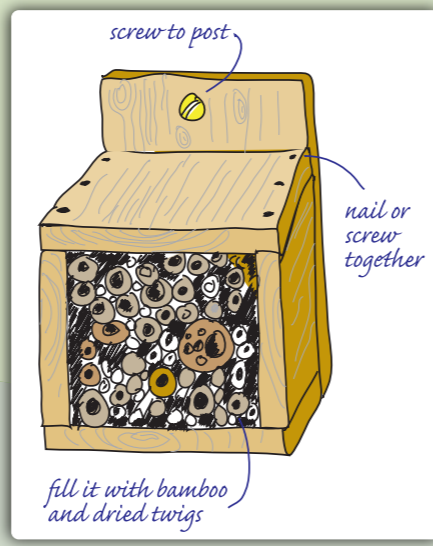
DON'T MEAN TO 'BUG' YA!

Making a bug box is easy, and good for your garden too. Why? Because it will become a home to the good guys like **bees**, **spiders**, **ladybirds** and **lacewings** (lacewings love to munch on aphids and mites that damage our plants).

All you need is a length of **scrap timber**, preferably untreated (no paint, varnish or stain) about 4" wide, and at least 2' long. The measurements are not important: we are going to make a simple box with four pieces of wood of the same length, and then cut a piece slightly longer for the back. You can nail these together if you wish; make sure to use tacks or thin nails in case you split the timber. You can also drill holes and use screws if you wish, but we are not doing fine carpentry here; it's a bug box!

Leave the front open and pack it with lengths of **bamboo** of different sizes, and other dried large twigs and small branches. We are trying to make a nice home for our favourite bugs. Nail or screw the bug box to a fence post or similar spot, somewhere with some shelter from the wind and rain.

You can make this and fit it at any time of the year. Obviously you will need to use a saw and probably hammers and nails too, so make sure there is someone to give you a hand with the DIY stuff. We did a quick sketch below to give you an idea.



The Glás

Going green in a world gone mad!



"Who can you call? Slug-busters!"

Pest control in your garden can be a tricky thing. Some of you will have done lots of hard work to create your very own little veggie patch. You planted the seeds and watched them grow. Then suddenly, just when you were dreaming of yummy salads and fresh runner beans... chomp! The slugs ate the lot! But don't despair. There are things you can do to avoid nasty slug pellets which we really don't recommend. Firstly, tidy up the places where slugs like to hide (under pots and stones and leaf piles). Set up some beer traps and clean them regularly (it's a nicer way to go than poisonous pellets!). Mulch around your veg with sharp bark chippings or lava rock, if you can find it. Egg shells do the same trick. You can also plant mint and other herbs such as rosemary and lemon balm. Slugs don't like the smell and will stay away!

FUN FACT
Slugs are molluscs which means they have more in common with octopus and squid than any other creepie-crawlie you might find in your garden!

QUIZ

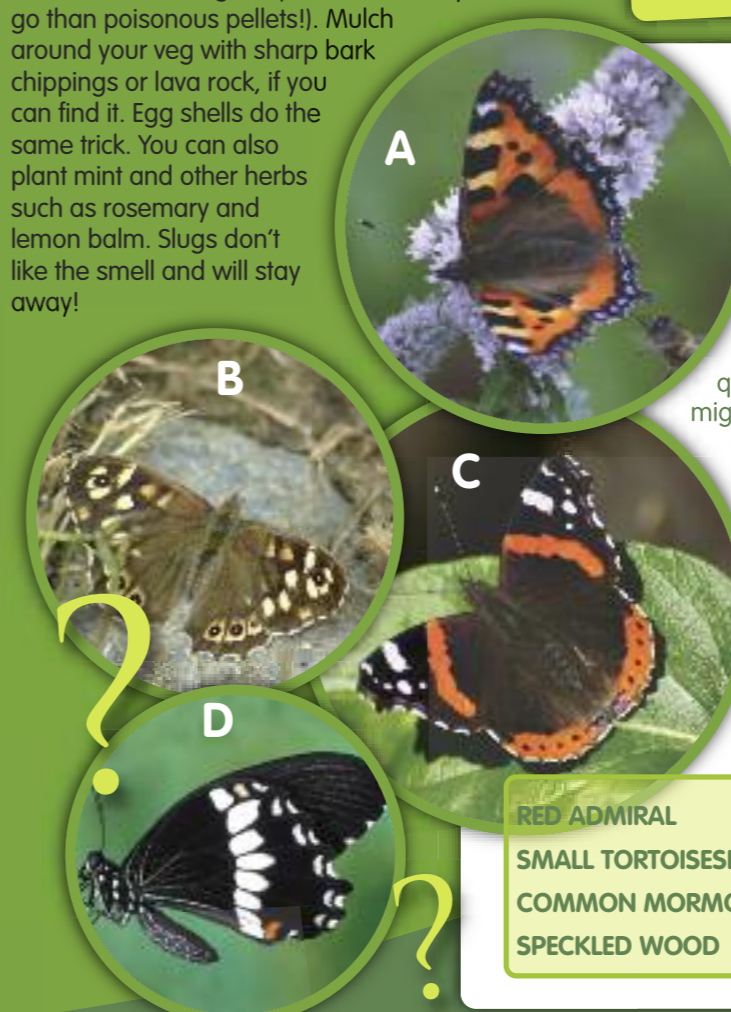
Why did the butterfly flutter by? Most likely, the word 'butterfly' comes from an Anglo-Saxon word *butterfloege*, which probably refers to the buttery yellow-coloured Yellow Brimstone, a common species in those days.

There are over 30 species of butterfly to be found in Ireland (33 at the last count) though some of these are quite rare and hard to find. Some are native, and some migrate here from warmer countries.

So here's the question:

Can you identify each of these butterflies? Just write the letter in beside the name (yep, we've made it too easy!). Then, if you know your Irish species, you'll be able to tell us which one won't be seen here any time soon (unless you are in a butterfly farm, of course!). If you need some help, or would just like to find out more about Irish butterflies, check out:

www.butterflyireland.com and www.irishbutterflies.com



- RED ADMIRAL
- SMALL TORTOISESHELL
- COMMON MORMON
- SPECKLED WOOD

So once you have correctly identified the four butterflies, you will probably have worked out the odd one out is...

Answers below. Upside down, as always. And no peeking!

Word Search Find 15 Irish butterflies

They can be forwards, backwards, vertical, horizontal or diagonal

- peacock
 - tortoiseshell
 - red admiral
 - common blue
 - ringlet
 - meadow brown
 - gatekeeper
 - small white
 - orange tip
 - brimstone
 - speckled wood
 - painted lady
 - large heath
 - dingy skipper
 - grayling
- s p n w o r b w o d a e m l p
e g r a y l i n g s k e e l e
a d e v o w b b a s k e t e a
d i d t u p r e t u n f d h v
o n a d o b i w e l n d u s d
o g d a h c m t k c o c a e p
w y m d t m s f e d b r i s o
d s i s a b t r e g n a g i e
e k r c e s o i p m n e e o l
l i a w h a n n e n f a l t a
k p l o e b e g r m s c r r x
c p e o g e u l b n o m m o c
e e w d r n t e h e a t h t r
p r i p a i n t e d l a d y l
s m a l l w h i t e a w v s y

Dale Treadwell: Dale has presented environmental education activities for 17 years in Ireland, his native Australia and the U.S.A. In Ireland over the last eight years, Dale has been the Education Officer for Conservation Volunteers Ireland and a regular member of the Dublin Zoo summer camp programmes. Currently, Dale is sub-contracted to local authorities, INTO Heritage in Schools Programmes, DCU Irish Centre for Talented Youth, ENFO, BT Young Scientist Awards, Bloom Garden Show among others to facilitate educational workshops in schools and public venues. Dale has become a regular feature on RTÉ's 'the DEN' and TV3, promoting environmental interests.

Dale is joined by **Declan Kenny** who has years of experience in writing, publishing, design and layout and environmental matters.