

# BIODIVERSITY IN YOUR GARDEN

A COLOURING BOOK

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# Make your garden a home for wildlife



Your garden is home to lots of flowers, trees, insects, birds and other animals, which we call 'biodiversity'. There are over 2 million gardens in Ireland (or 359,000 acres!). That's a lot of space where we could welcome nature. By making your garden more 'biodiversity-friendly', you will be inviting lots of biodiversity into your garden, and it will become an even more beautiful and interesting place to spend time.

Here are 10 steps your family can take to make your garden better for biodiversity:



Our gardens can offer lots of little habitats across the countryside for our native wildlife.



1. By putting out food for the birds, your garden will be visited by lots of different garden birds. You can enjoy watching them up close and you can also learn to identify the different types.

2. Put up bird boxes to offer new homes for your garden birds.



3. Plant native trees and hedgerows around your garden. These will offer both food for insects and birds as well as nesting sites.



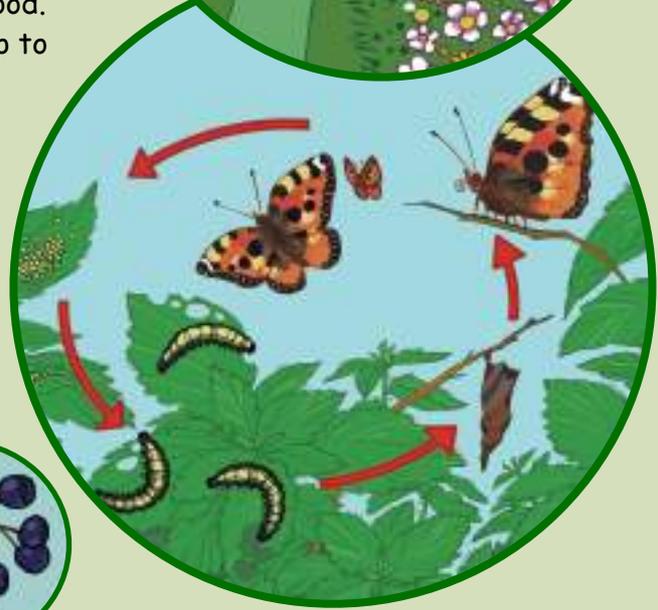
4. Let the Dandelions bloom! Dandelions are really important for bees and butterflies, so if you can let them bloom and delay cutting your lawn until after mid-April, you'll be feeding bees and butterflies.

5. Cut your grass less often, or leave a strip around the edge of your lawn to grow longer, and you will get lots of wildflowers growing there for you to enjoy - and the insects will love feeding on their nectar.



6. Create a Log Pile to give a home to important insects and fungi that live off dead wood. These insects will also help to feed the birds!

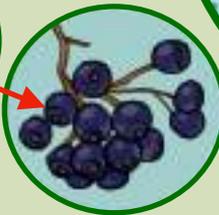
7. Leave a corner for nettles, which are the food plant for many of our butterflies. A patch of bramble and ivy will also provide flowers to feed the bees and butterflies, while the blackberries and ivy berries will feed the birds.



Bramble



Ivy



8. Water: Build a **bird bath** for birds or a **wildlife pond** to create a home for frogs and lots of water insects, including beautiful dragonflies and damselflies.



9. Make a compost heap to create your own compost, help to reduce waste, and to help the local worms & mini-beasts

10. Stop using chemical pesticides or herbicides and you will see more bees, butterflies and birds visiting your garden.





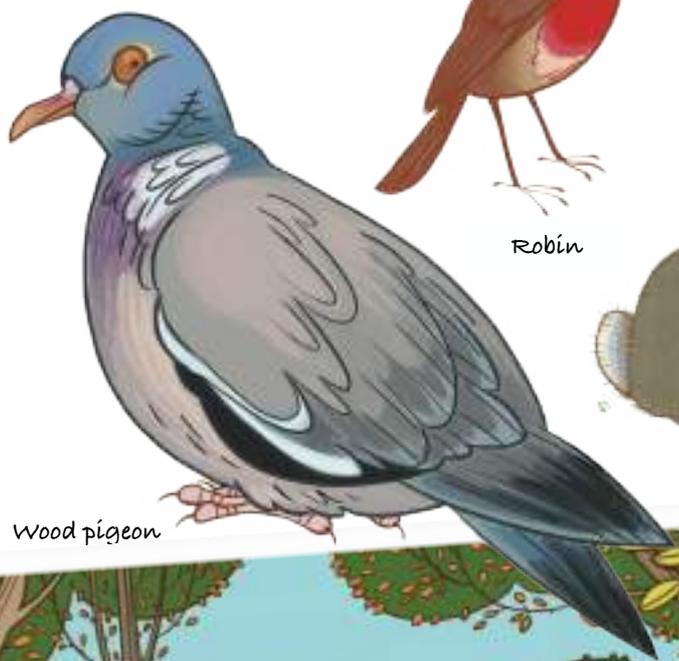
Goldfinch



Dragonfly



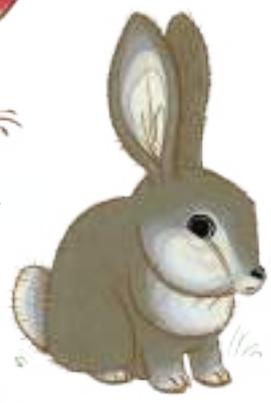
Peacock butterfly



Wood pigeon



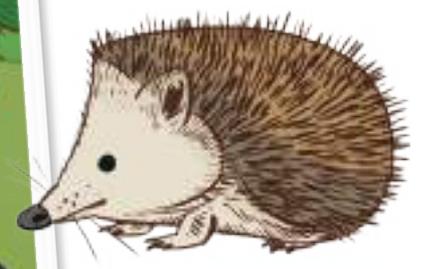
Robin



Rabbit



Blue Tit



Hedgehog



Earthworms





## Feeding the Birds

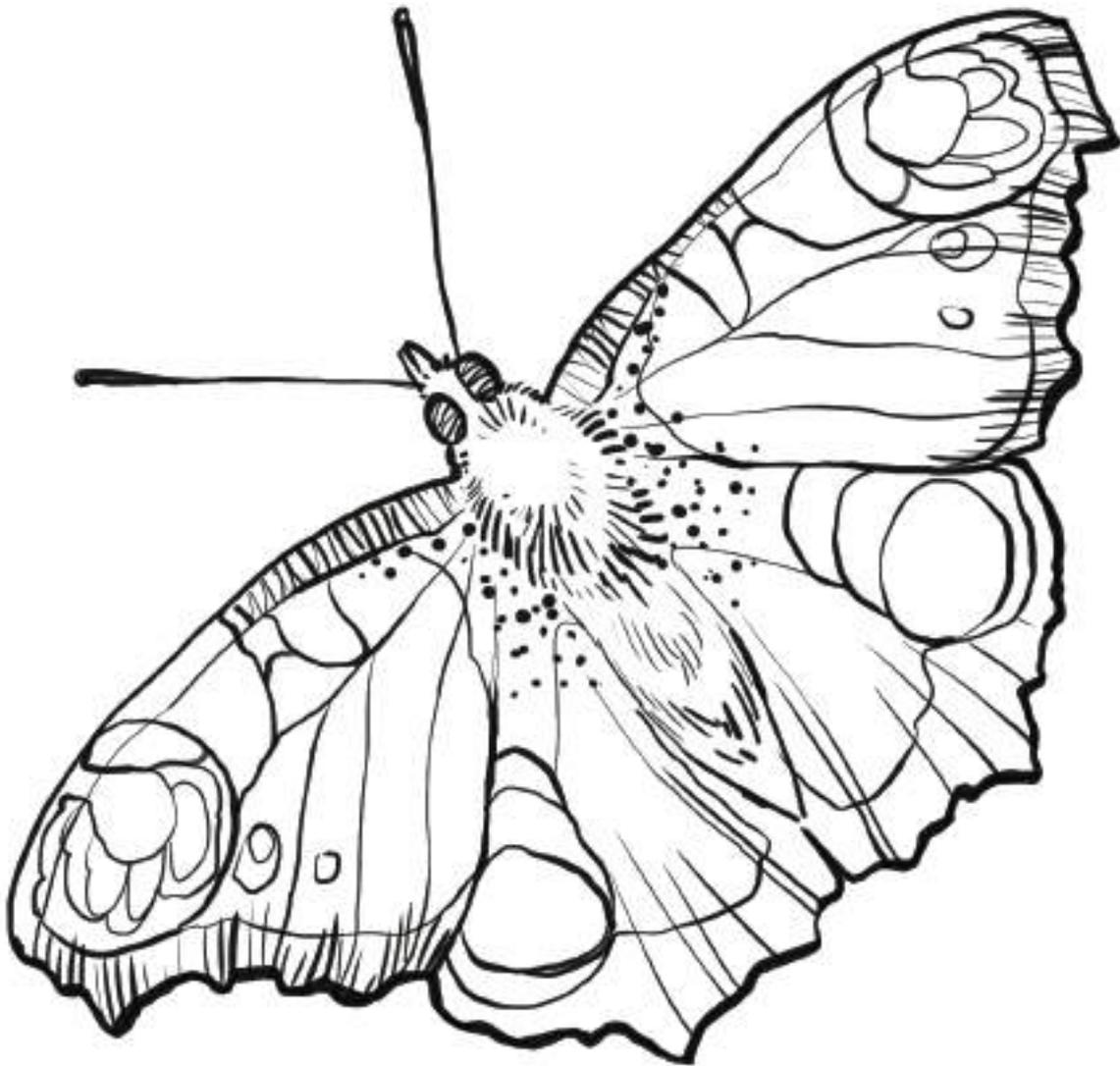
Putting out food is a great way to welcome lots of different birds into your garden. Here we can see **Thrush** and **Blackbird** feeding on the ground, a **Robin** on top of the bird table and **Blue Tits**, **Greenfinch**, **Goldfinch** and **Great Tits** enjoying the hanging feeders.

Lots of birds, like the **Chaffinches** in this picture, love coconuts, which you could hang from trees. And of course **Rooks** and **magpies** may visit to see what they can find in this bird-friendly garden



To learn more about your garden birds,  
see [www.birdwatchireland.ie](http://www.birdwatchireland.ie)

## Peacock Butterfly



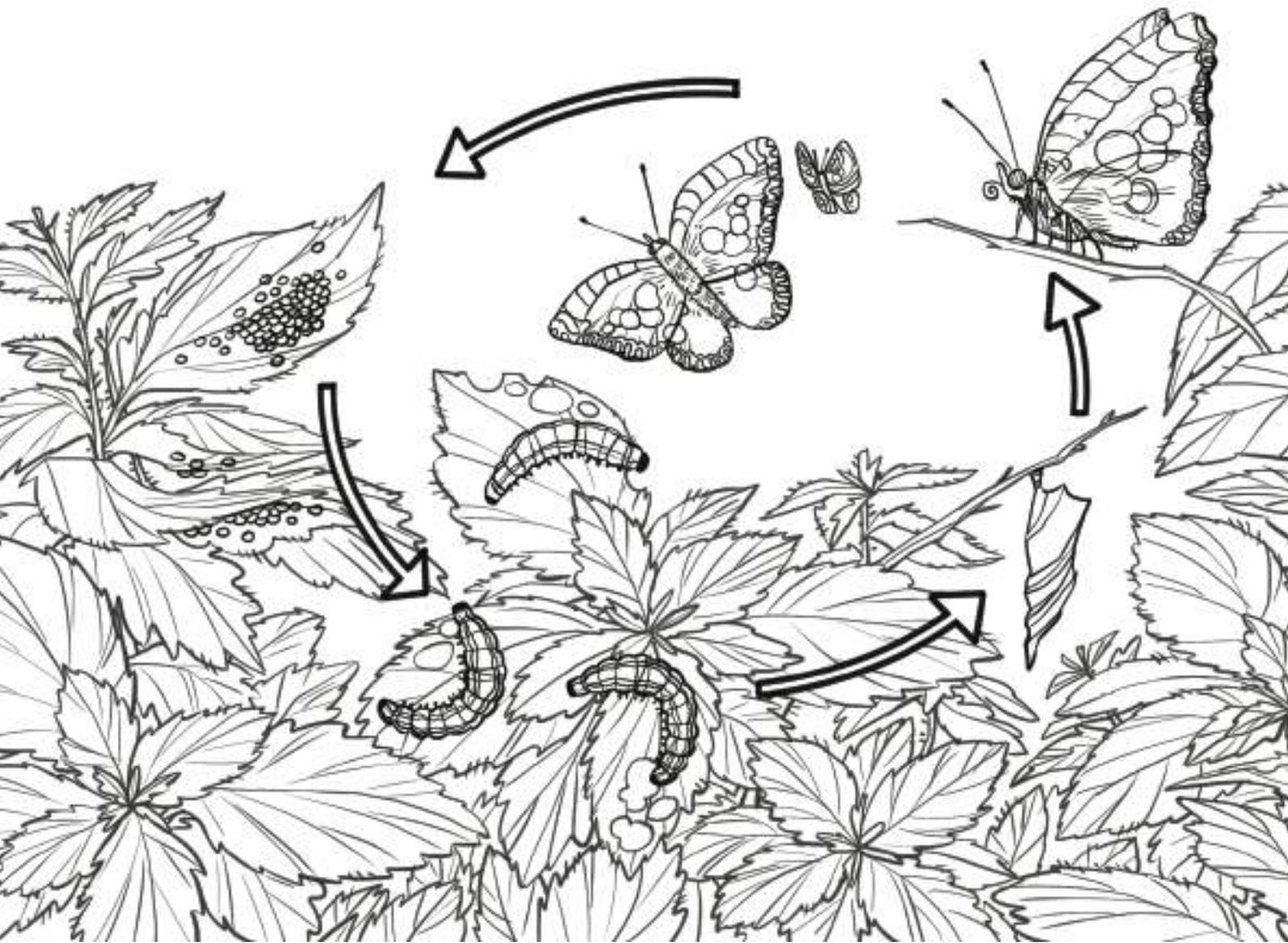
We have 35 different types of Butterfly in Ireland. How many can you find in your garden? If you have lots of pollinator-friendly flowers, trees or shrubs, you'll have lots of butterflies visiting these flowers to drink nectar.

This is the Peacock Butterfly, which gets its name because of the 'eyespots' on its wings - similar to a peacock's feathers.



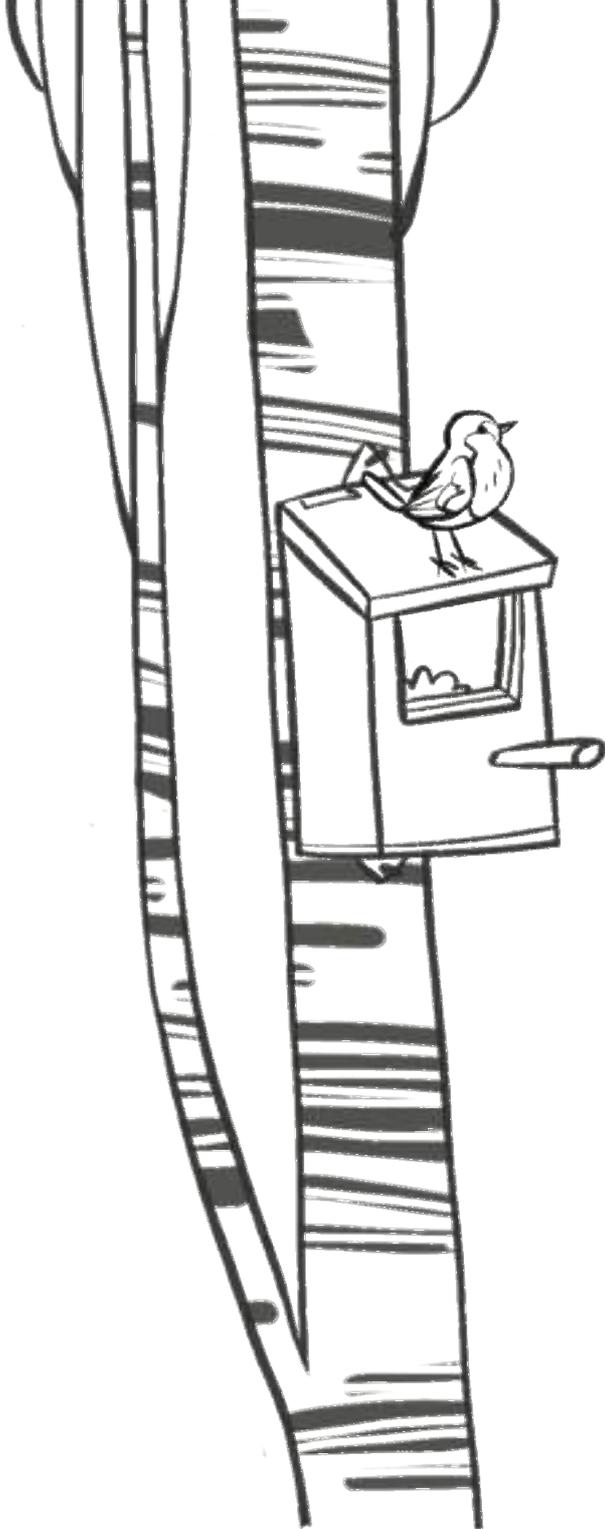
You can order guides to our butterflies, trees, bumblebees, shieldbugs and ladybirds here: [www.biodiversityireland.ie/shop/](http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/shop/)

## Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly life cycle on Nettles

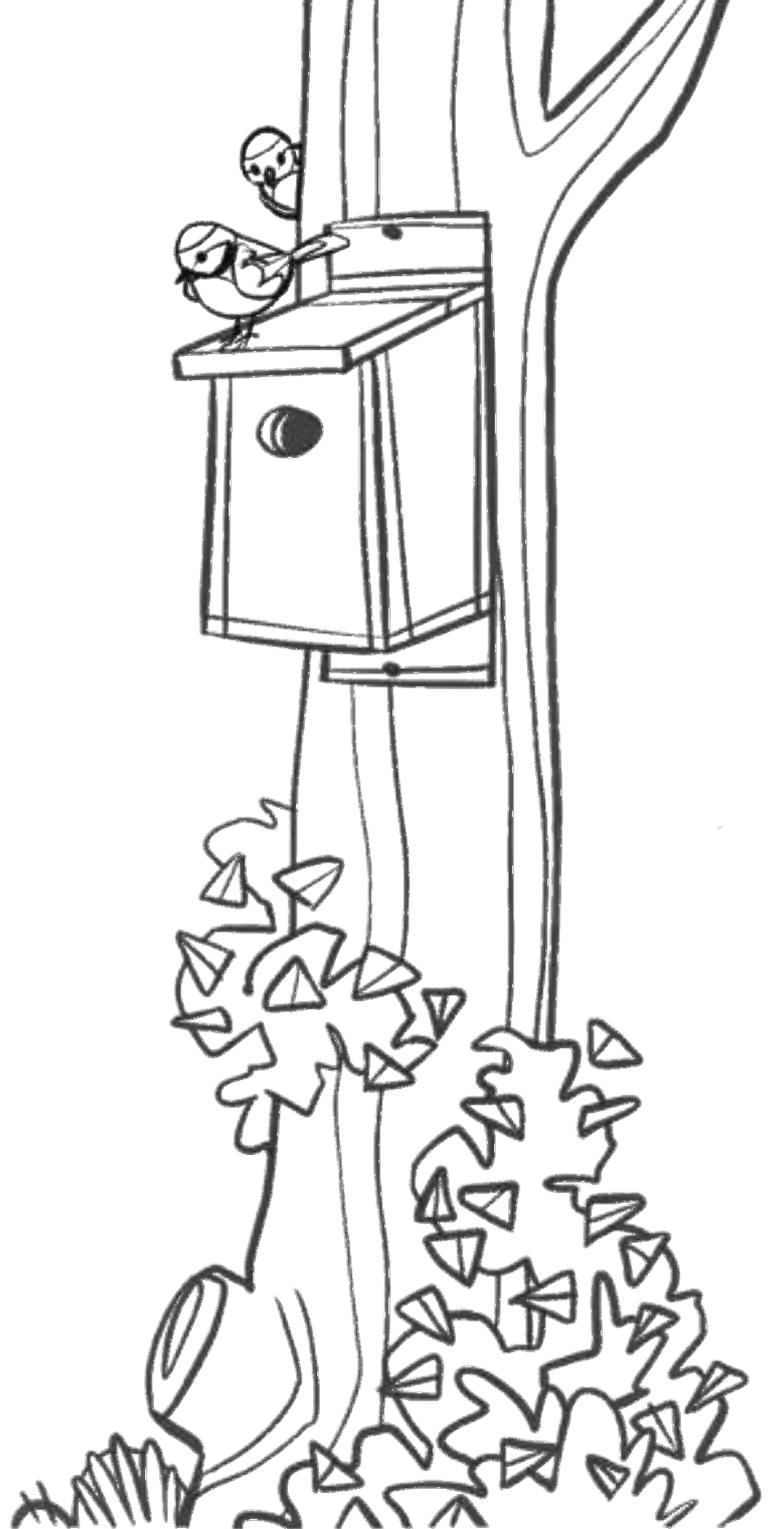


Many butterfly caterpillars like to feed on nettles, so the female butterfly lays her eggs on nettle leaves. When her caterpillars emerge, they will be in the best place to feed and grow big on those juicy nettle leaves.

Small Tortoiseshell (shown above), Peacock and Red Admiral butterflies all lay their eggs on nettles, so if you can leave a small patch of nettles in a corner of your garden this will help our butterflies!



Robin



Blue Tit

## Homes for Birds

Our garden birds nest in hedgerows and trees. You can also add to the range of nesting sites in your garden by putting up bird houses. Different birds use different types of bird houses. For instance, the Robin likes an open nest box, while the Blue Tit, which nests in holes in trees or walls, prefers a nest box with a very small entrance hole.

## Make a Bird Bath



Water is very important for birds - both for drinking and bathing, so that they can keep their feathers clean all year round.

Perhaps you could make a Bird Bath for your garden?

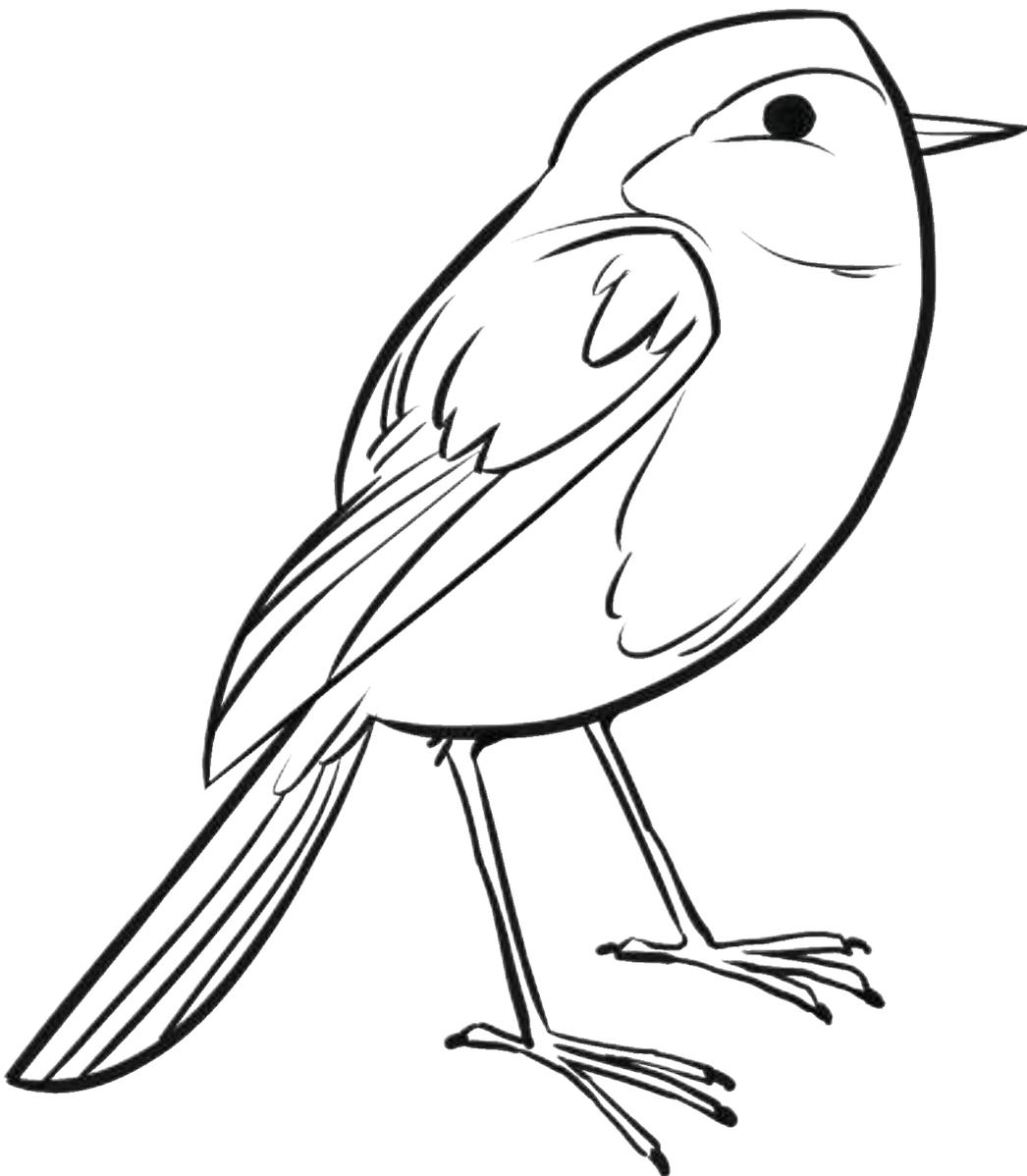
It could be as simple as a large shallow bowl.

It's great fun to watch the birds excitedly splashing the water up over their backs as they bathe.

## Robin

The **Robin** is a very common bird in most gardens. If you're outside digging, this clever little bird will often come very close to check your upturned soil for worms to eat.

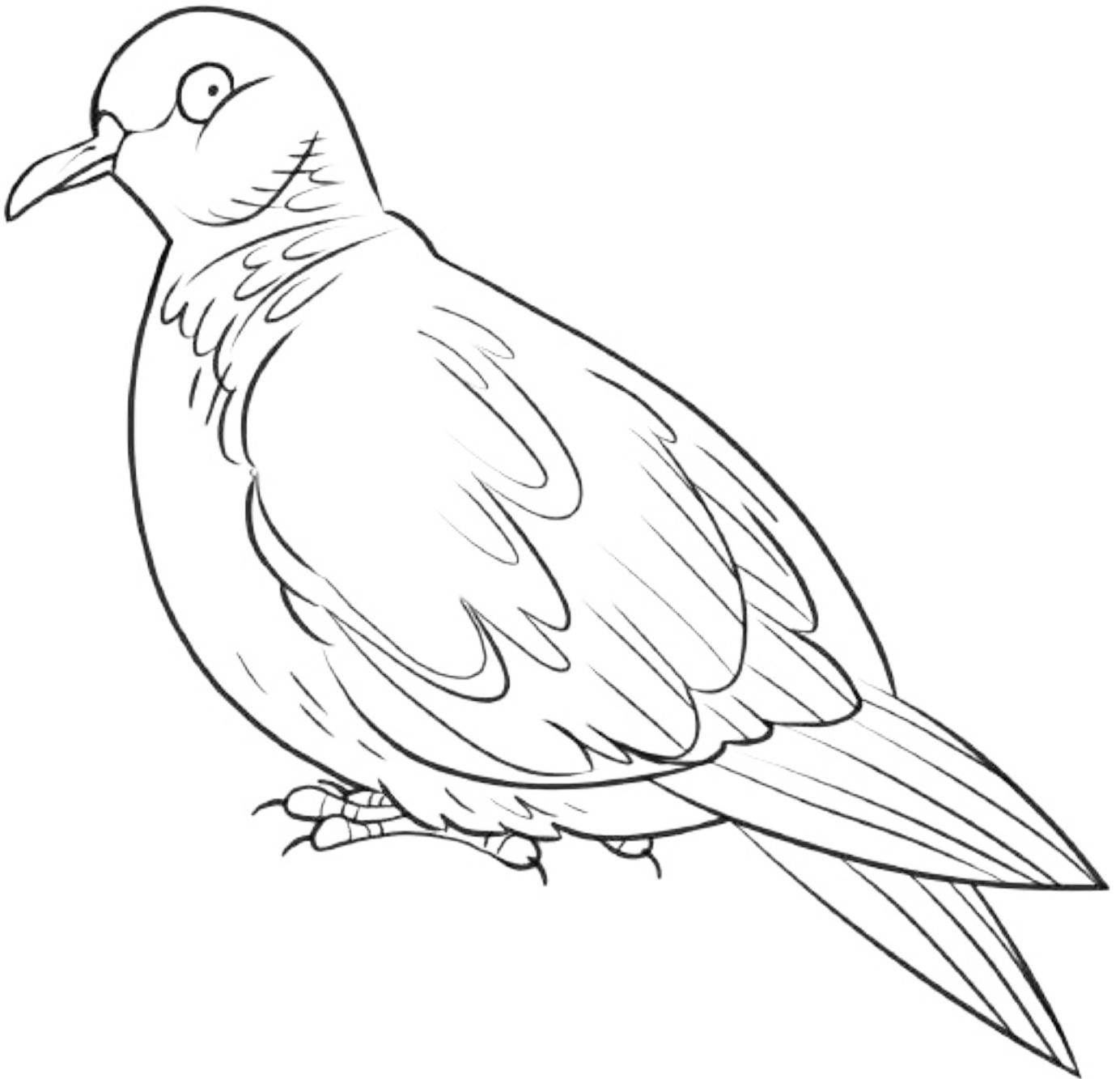
A male Robin is very territorial and doesn't like to share a garden with other male robins. So Robins sing all year round to show that this garden is occupied: keep away!





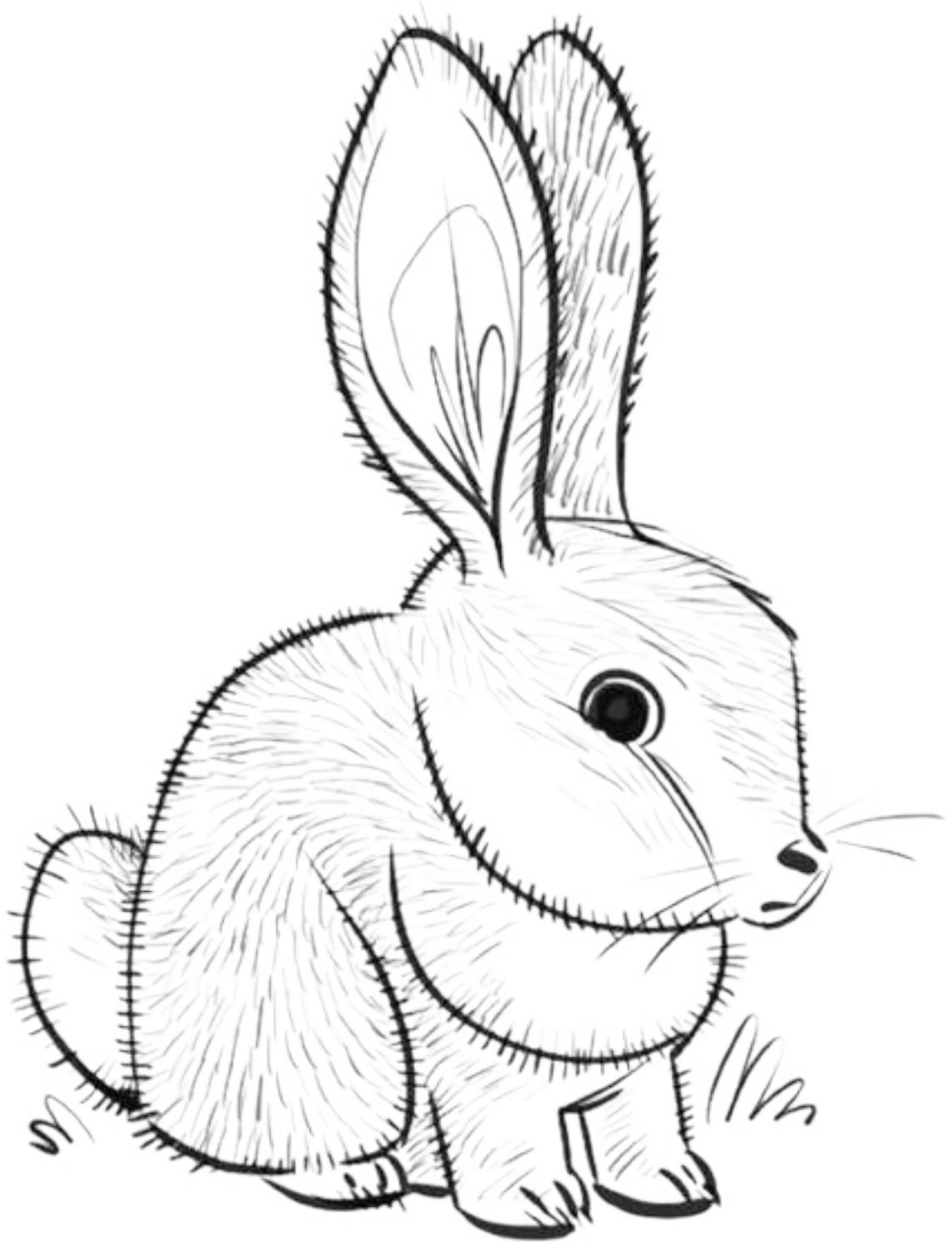
## Blue Tit

The **Blue Tit** is a very cute little bird. It has a bright blue 'cap' of feathers on its head and a yellow breast. They are very common in gardens and love to visit bird feeders and can hang upside down to reach the nuts and seeds. They also eat spiders and insects, including lots of caterpillars!



## Wood Pigeon

The Wood Pigeon is pretty big and has a white patch on its neck, with shiny green and purple feathers just above this patch. Wood pigeons often choose to make their nest in a hedgerow or tree in gardens. Their call is very easy to identify - it's a cooing sound, which sounds like 'Take two, do, take two!' And when they take flight, their wings make a lot of flapping noise.

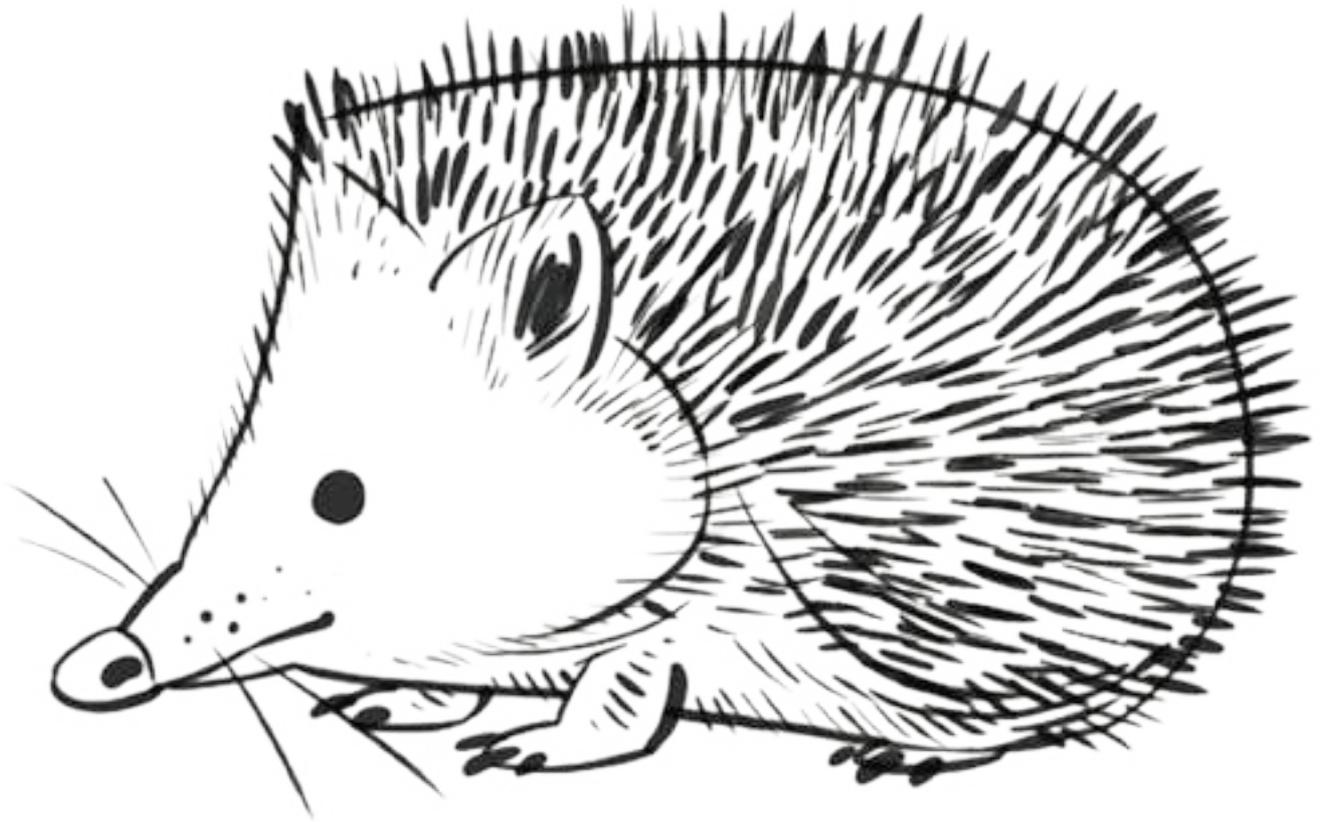


## Rabbit

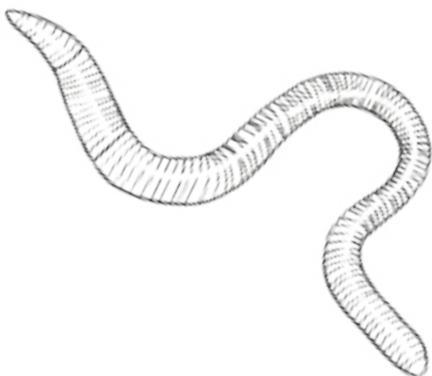
Rabbits are common in many gardens. Rabbits live underground in large family groups in a tunnel system called a **warren**. They usually hide during the day - especially if you have a pet cat or dog. But after dark, they emerge from their burrows to feed on short grass.

# Hedgehog

Hedgehogs eat slugs, worms, beetles and other insects. Gardeners love when hedgehogs visit because they eat lots of slugs and snails that like to munch on their vegetables. The Hedgehog has lots of spines that help to protect it. They can roll up into a ball to protect their soft belly and face.



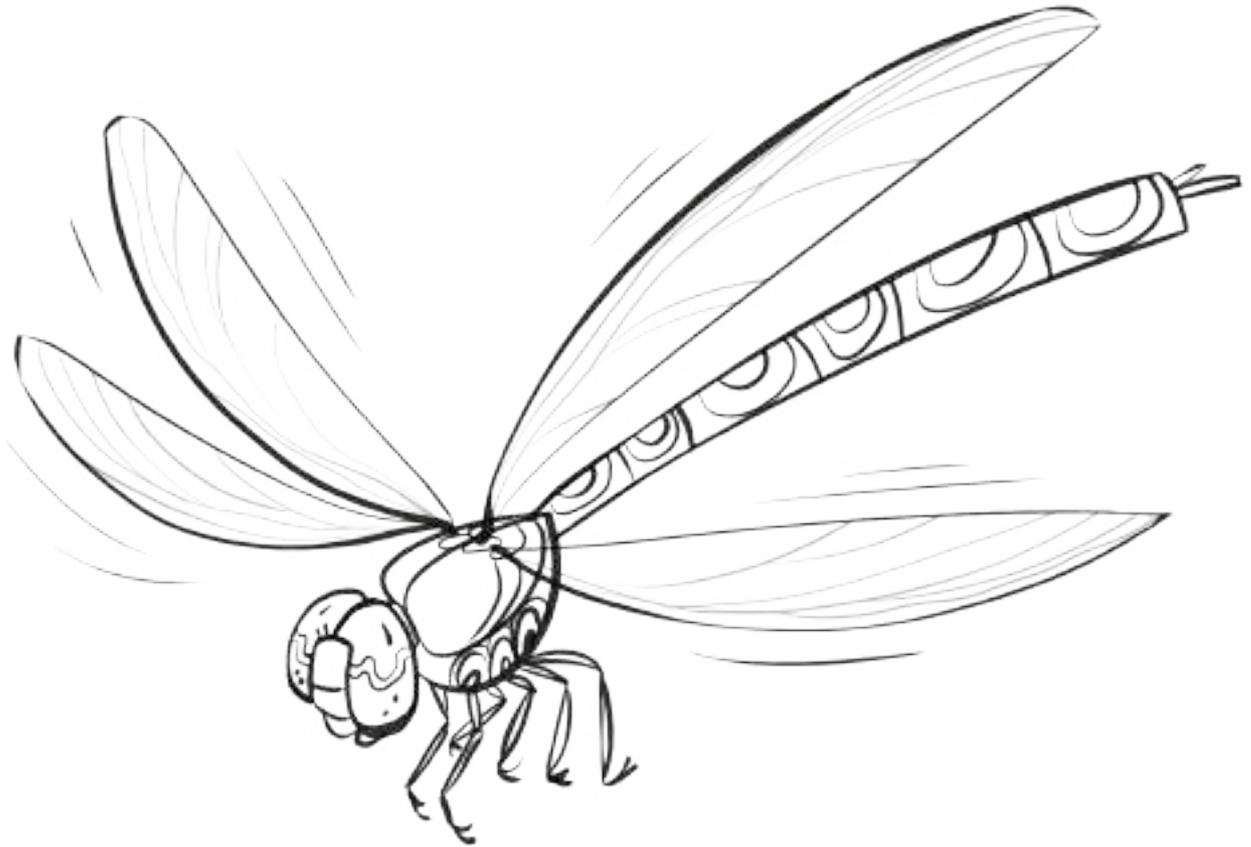
# Earthworms



Earthworms do a very important job that helps us to grow our food. Earthworms live in tunnels they dig underground. As they move through the soil, they mix it really well, and bring air and water into it so that it's healthy and good for growing our food and flowers. Some worms come to the surface at night to pull down dead leaves into their tunnels, recycling the goodness of these plants back into the soil.

Thanks worms!

# Dragonfly



There are 32 different types of Dragonflies and Damselflies in Ireland. Damselflies have thin narrow bodies and usually close their wings when they are resting, while Dragonflies have thicker, bulkier bodies, and keep their wings open when at rest.

They are usually seen around water, at ponds, streams, canals, rivers and lakes. They actually spend most of their lives - one to two years - living underwater while they are larvae. Some species live underwater for up to five years!

Then one summer they emerge from the water, crawl up a plant and shed their skin to reveal their beautiful wings. Dragonflies are large powerful flyers and often catch other insects in mid-air.

## Bat chasing a moth snack



A garden that is insect-friendly will also be good for bats. Our nine species of Irish bat eat only small insects, such as midges and moths, and spiders. A lot of energy is used in flight so bats must eat a lot! The tiny Common Pipistrelle Bat, in this picture - which could fit inside a matchbox when its wings are folded - eats about 3,000 midges and other small flies in a single night.



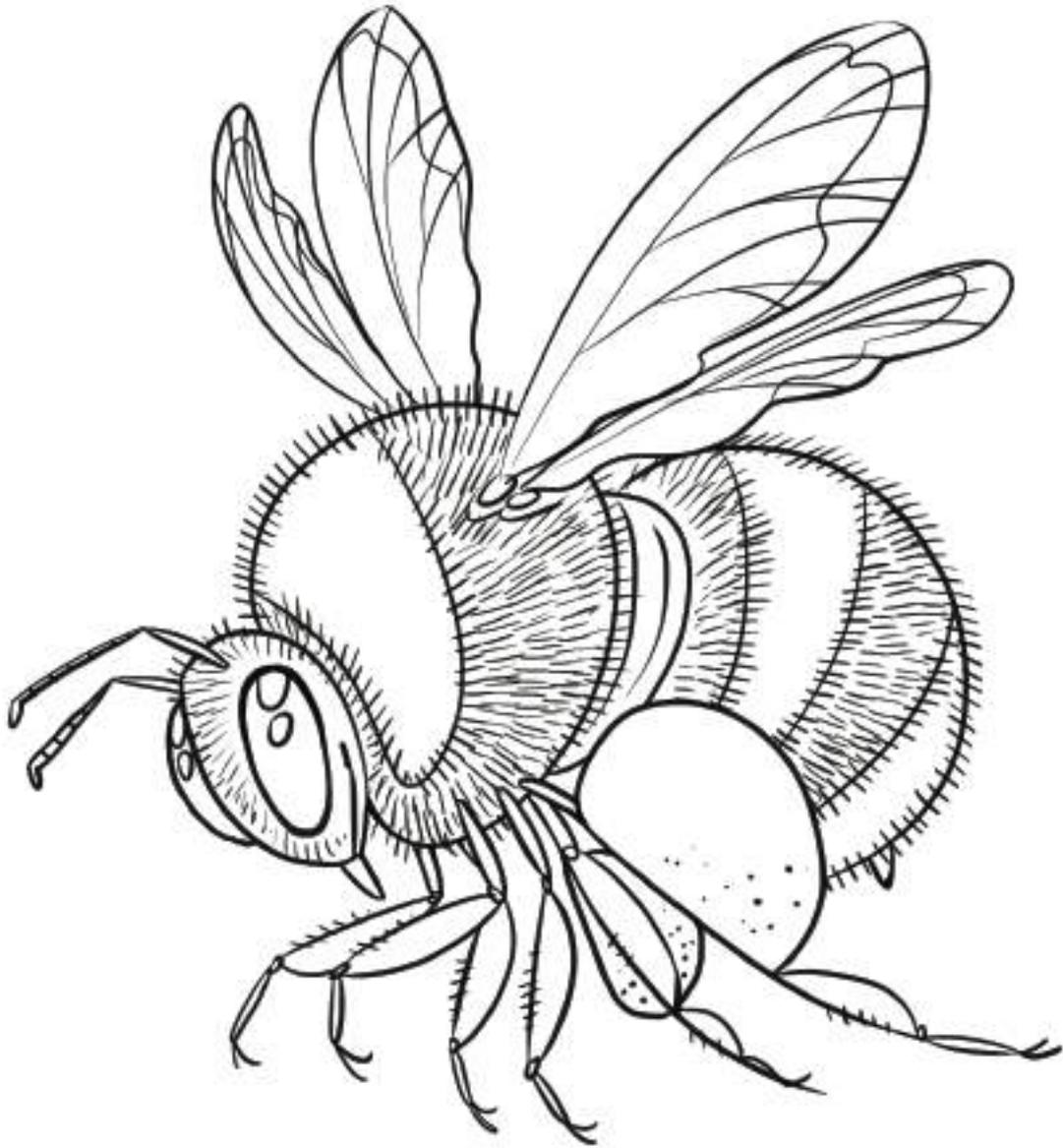
To learn more about Ireland's bats, see [www.batconservationireland.org](http://www.batconservationireland.org)

## Brown Long-eared Bat

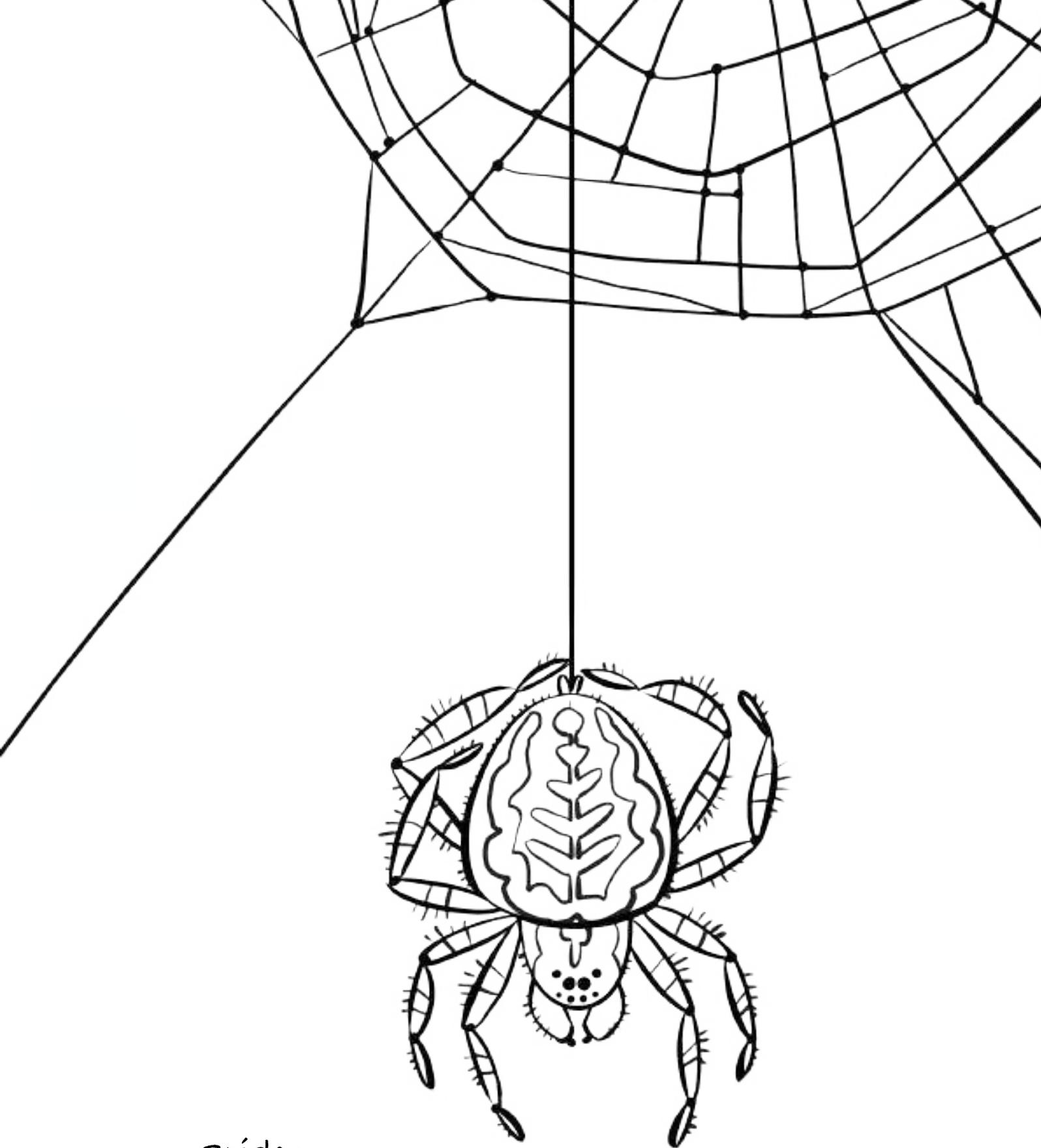


Bats hunt insects in darkness using their super hearing! As they fly they shout! We just can't hear them because their calls are at a higher frequency than our ears can detect. When the loud sounds bounce off objects, the echo bounces back to the bat and helps them to create a mental picture of what is ahead of them in the darkness - whether it's a tiny midge or a large tree. This is called **echolocation**. There are over 1400 moth species in Ireland. If you think about it, the best way to help bats is to make your garden insect or moth-friendly, by planting lots of pollen-rich flowers, shrubs and trees.

## Bumblebee



Bumblebees are very important pollinators. They visit flowers to drink nectar and collect pollen - in the large 'pollen sacs' on their back legs - to bring back to their nests to feed to the baby bees. While they are visiting a flower, pollen also sticks onto their furry bodies and is transferred onto the next flower they land on. This allows that flower to go on to produce yummy fruits and seeds that will grow into new plants.

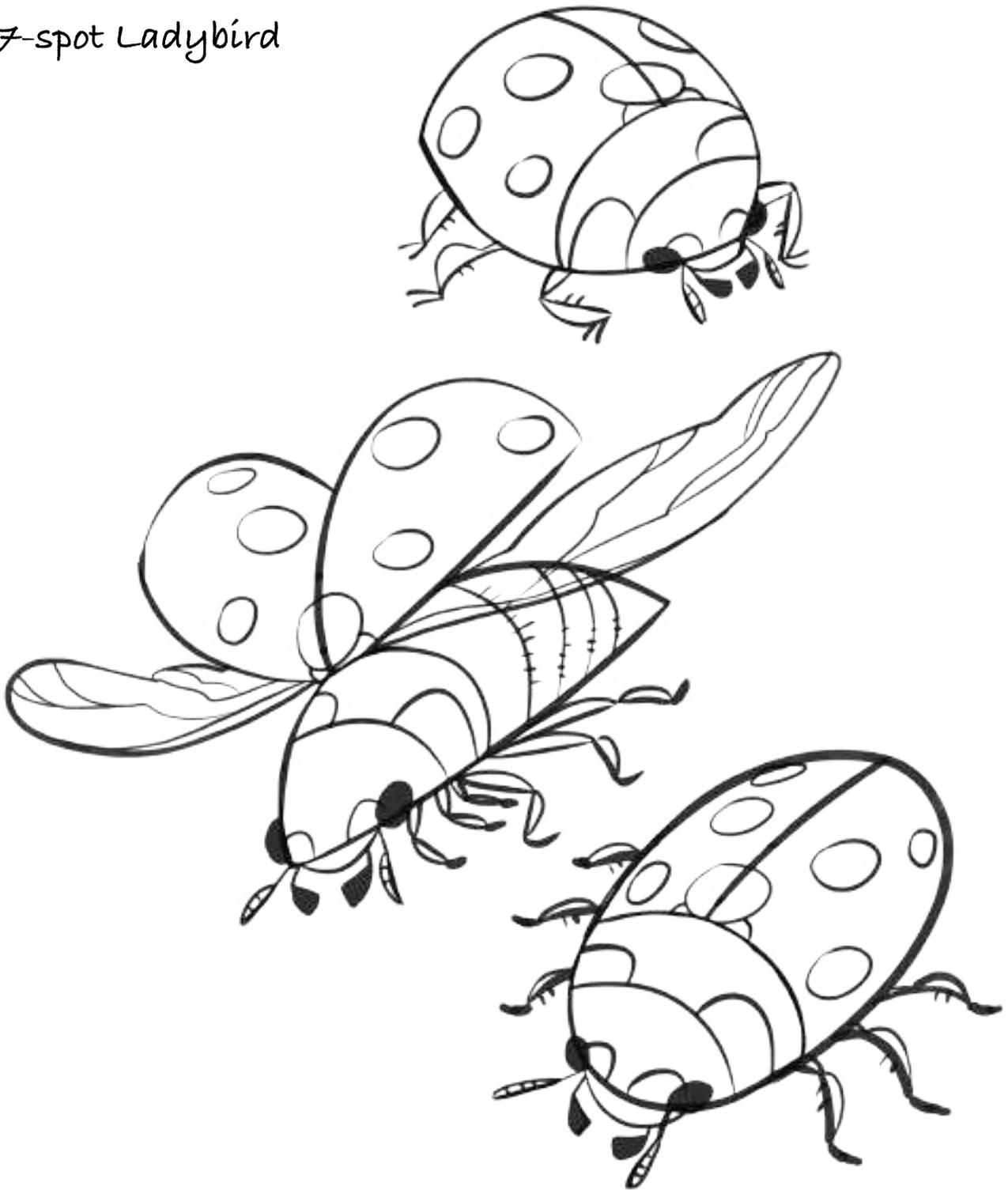


## Spider

Not everyone likes spiders, but they are amazing creatures! They're not insects, but Arachnids. You'll notice spiders have eight legs, unlike insects which have six.

Spiders are useful to have in your garden as they feed on insects that can damage plants. Most spiders spin webs to catch insects. Different spiders spin different types of webs. This one has spun an 'orb' web, but there are also sheet webs, tube webs and the delicate webs of money spiders you might see on your lawn in the early morning. Spiders usually spin a new web each day! The webs need to be fresh so they are sticky enough to catch their insect prey.

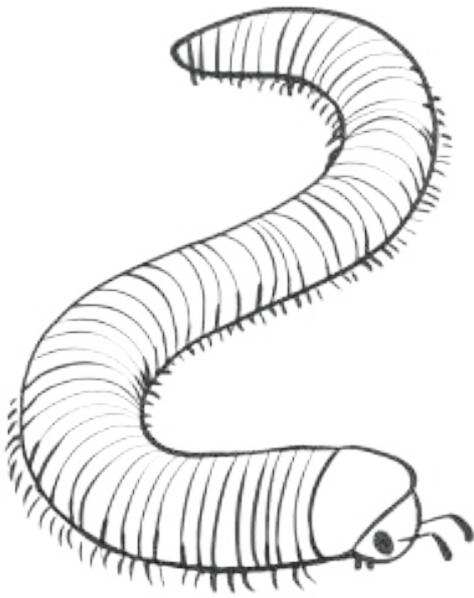
## 7-spot Ladybird



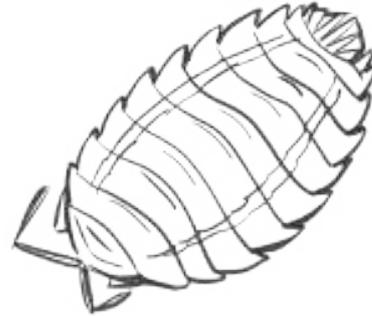
Did you know we have 21 different types of Ladybird in Ireland!  
They come in different colours - red, black, orange or yellow, and have a  
different number of spots on their wings - from two to 24.

Their bright colours warn hungry birds that they don't taste good.  
Both ladybird larvae and the adults are welcomed by gardeners because  
they eat plant pests, especially greenfly.

Millipedes, wood lice and pill bugs are important decomposers, breaking down dead plants, twigs and trees. This is very important to recycle nutrients back into soil.



Millipede

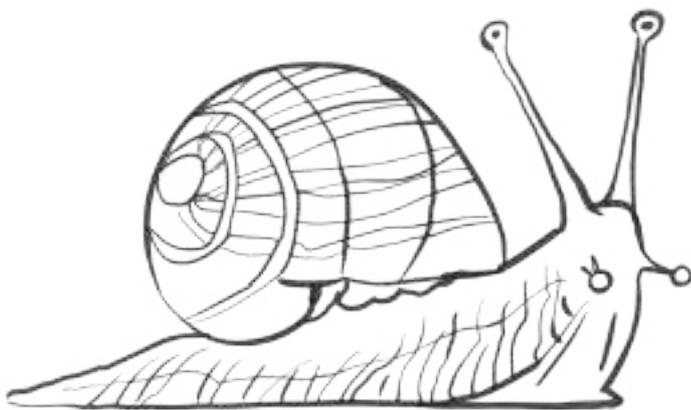


Woodlouse

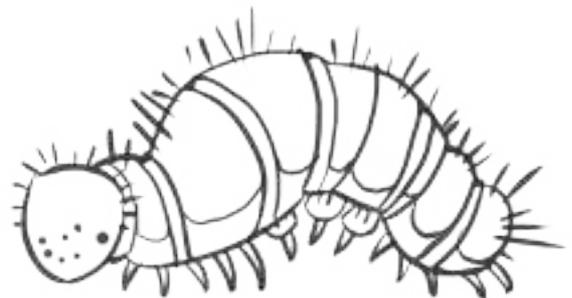
Pill woodlouse



The pill woodlouse can roll itself into a perfect ball.

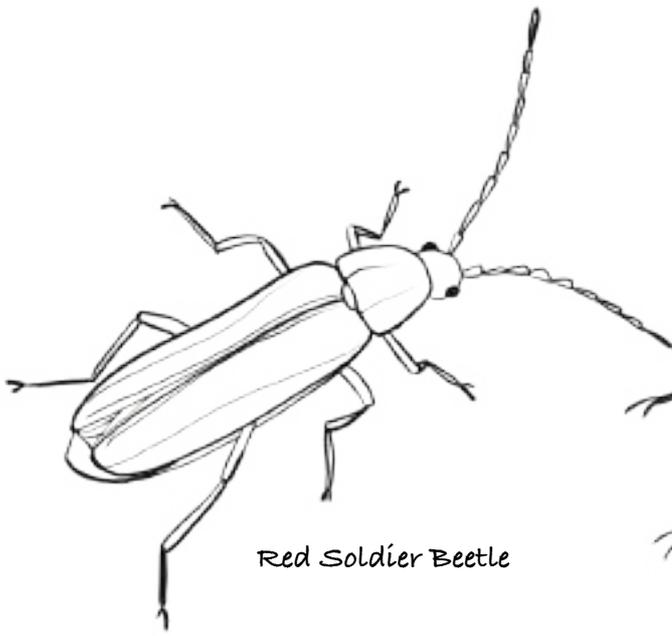


Snail

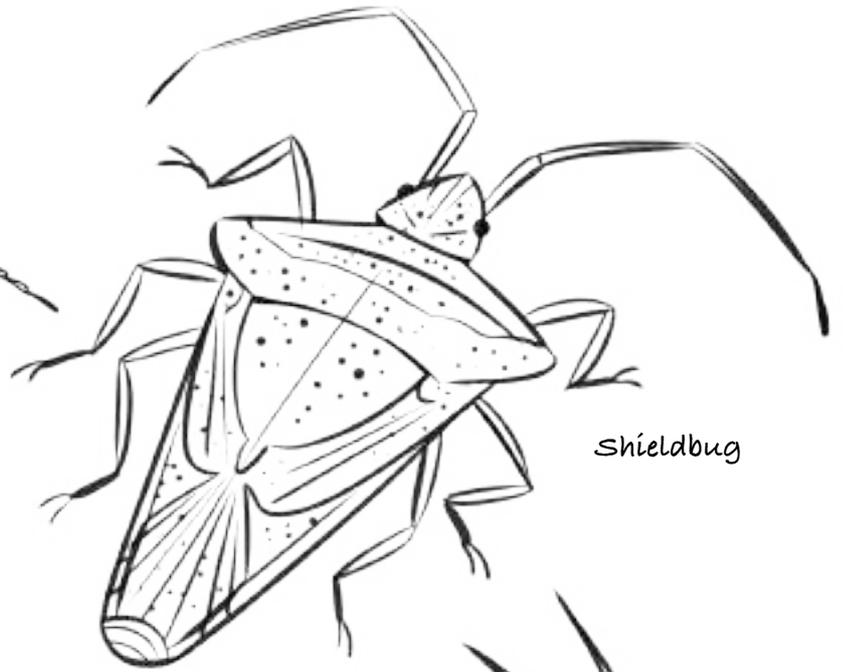


Caterpillar

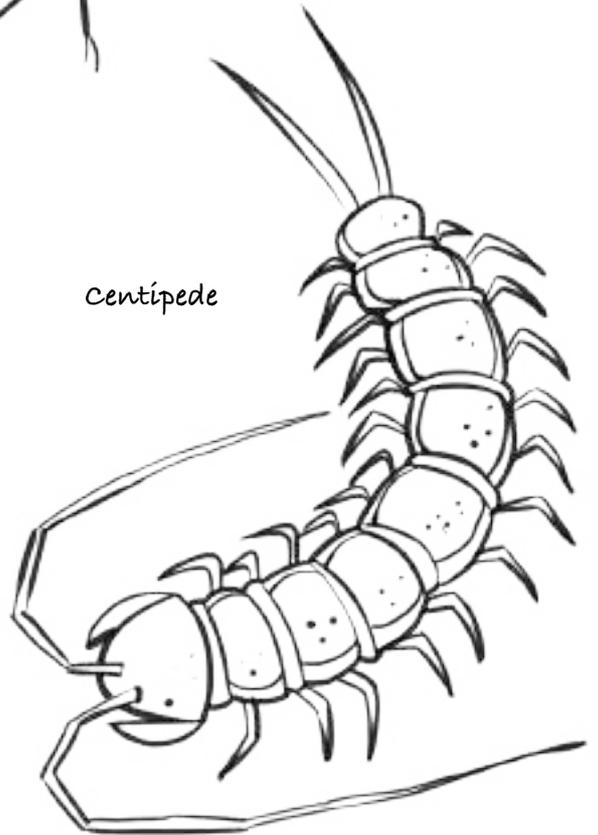
Moth and butterfly caterpillars, snails and slugs are very important foods for garden birds



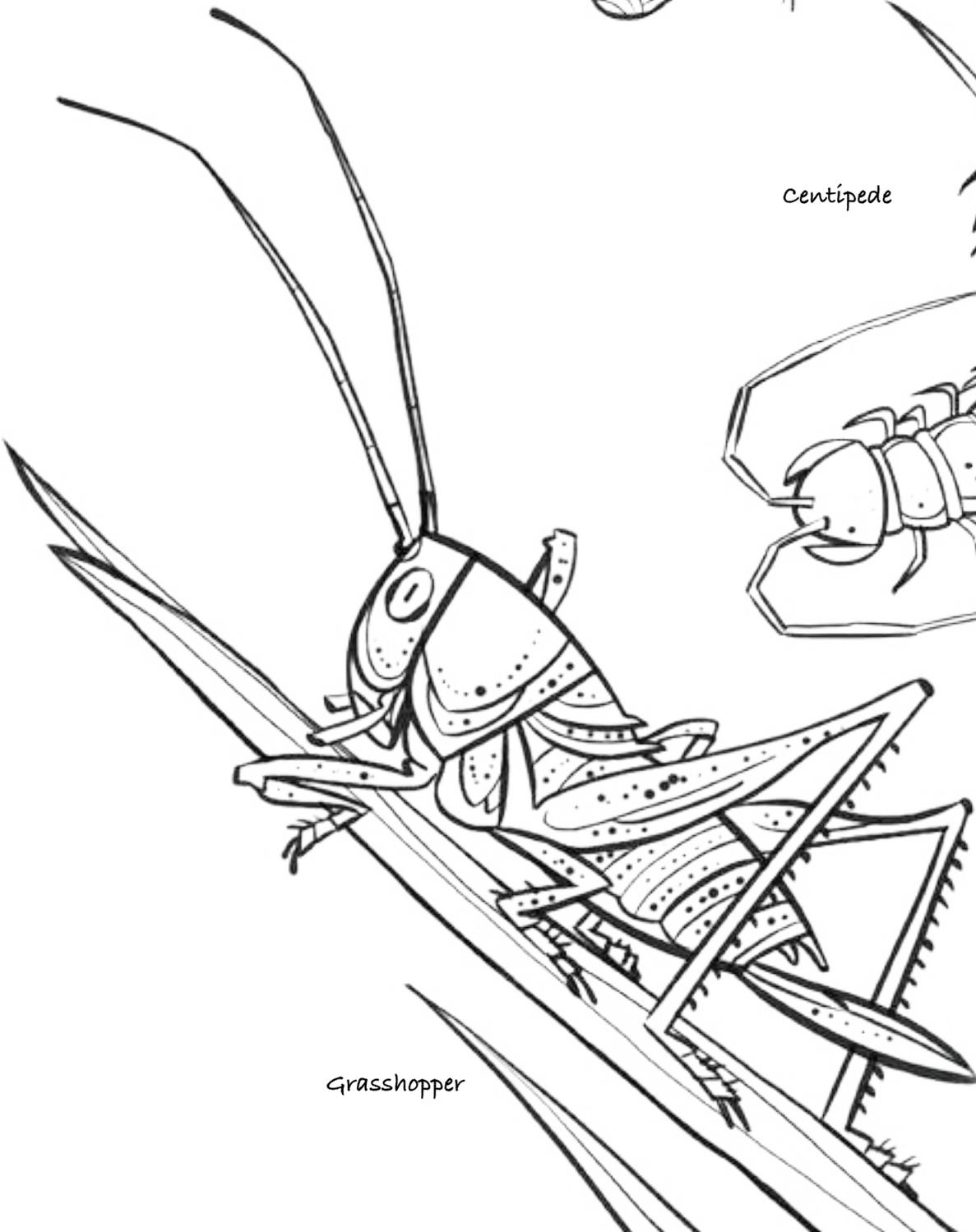
Red Soldier Beetle



Shieldbug



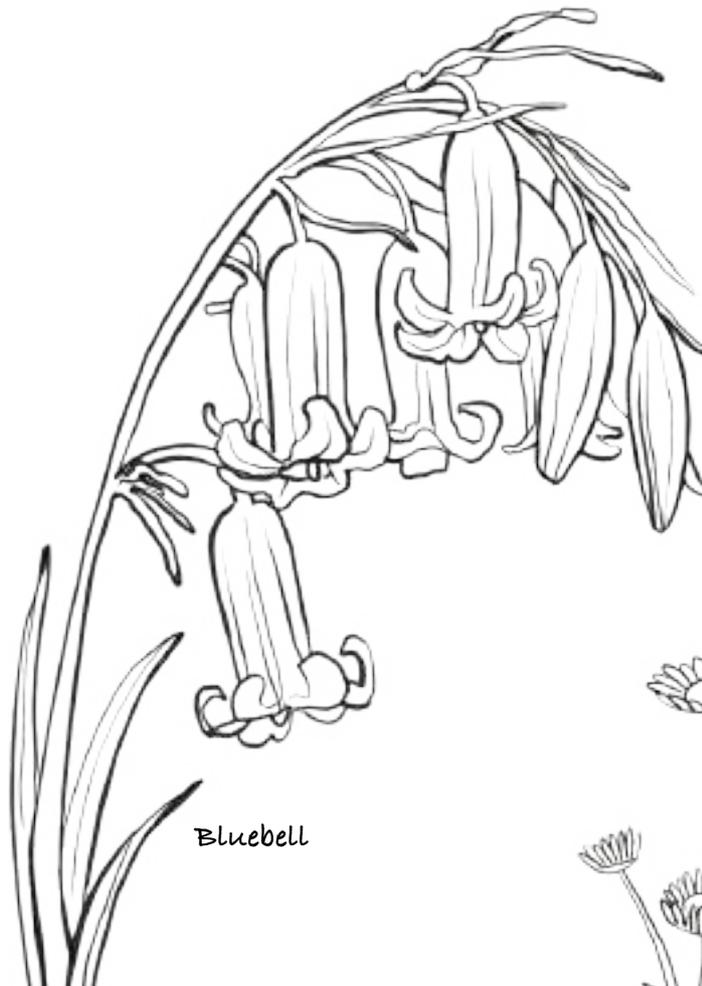
Centipede



Grasshopper

Wildflowers are not just pretty; they help to feed our pollinating insects, including bumblebees, solitary bees, butterflies, moths and hoverflies. Clover and Dandelions are super foods for pollinators!

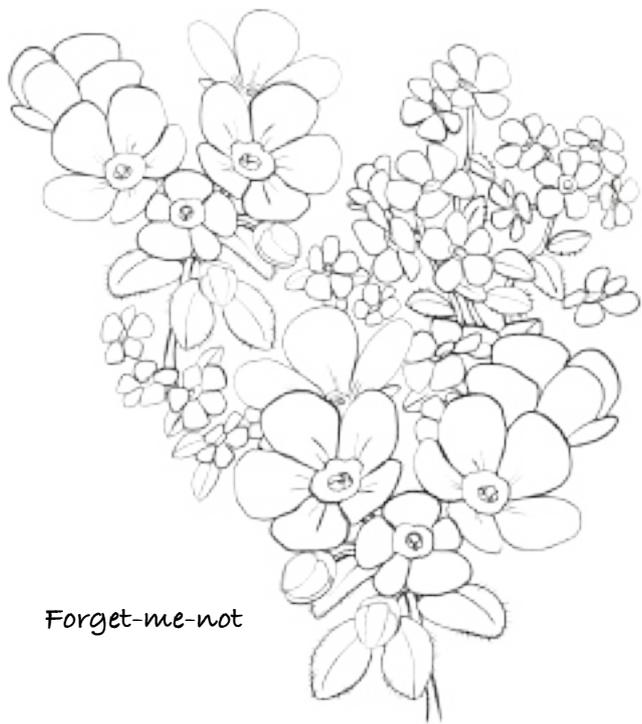
Dandelion



Bluebell

Daisy





Forget-me-not



Clover



The Foxglove is a beautiful tall plant with lots of flowers on one stem. Dark spots on the inside of each flower guide insects inside for nectar so that they can pollinate the flower. Foxgloves are very poisonous so it's best to admire but not touch!

Foxglove

## Wildlife Pond



A wildlife pond is a great addition to any garden. It can be as small as a sunken water barrel or as big as you like. Your pond will attract all sorts of birds and mammals to drink there, while underwater you'll find diving beetles, dragonfly and damselfly nymphs, tadpoles, backswimmers and even an insect called a 'water boatman'! It's great fun to try some pond-dipping each year to meet any new arrivals.

## Frog

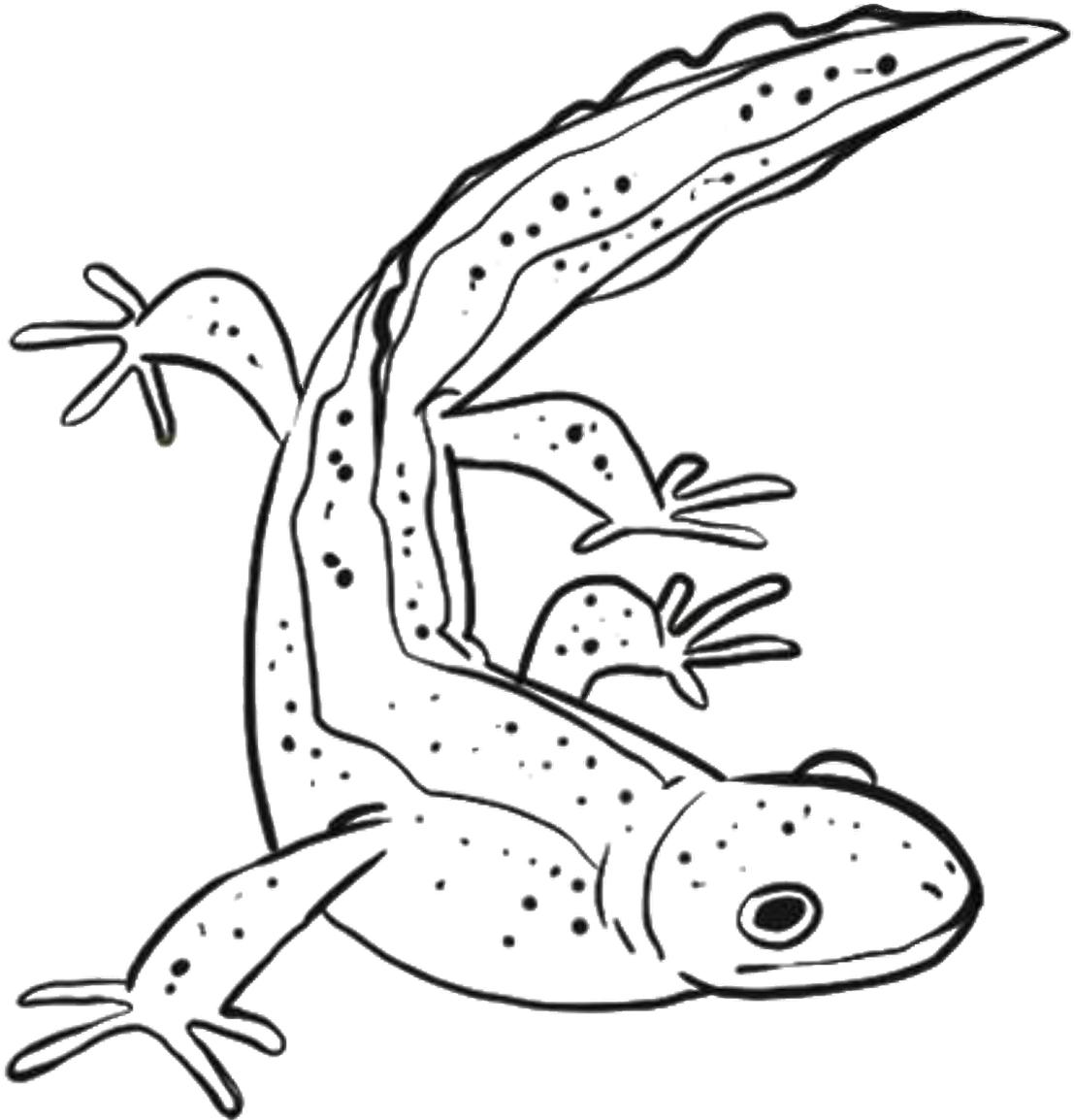


Frogs actually spend most of their time in grass, looking for insect prey. They only return to water each spring to breed. They usually travel back to the same pond or stream they hatched in themselves. From as early as January keep an eye on your local ponds to see if you can spot frogspawn. You could also return in March or April for a closer look at the emerged tadpoles.



To learn more about amphibians,  
see <https://thehsi.org>

## Newt



The Smooth Newt is sometimes mistaken for a small lizard but is actually an amphibian, related to frogs and toads. It flicks its long tail to help it swim. Like frogs, newts spend most of their lives on land, but return to ponds to breed. The female lays each of her eggs wrapped in a submerged leaf. You may find newts hiding in your garden under logs or stones where they might also hibernate over winter.



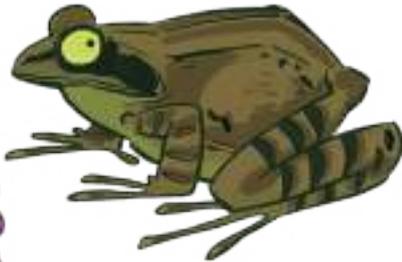
Brown Long-eared Bat



Clover



Dandelion



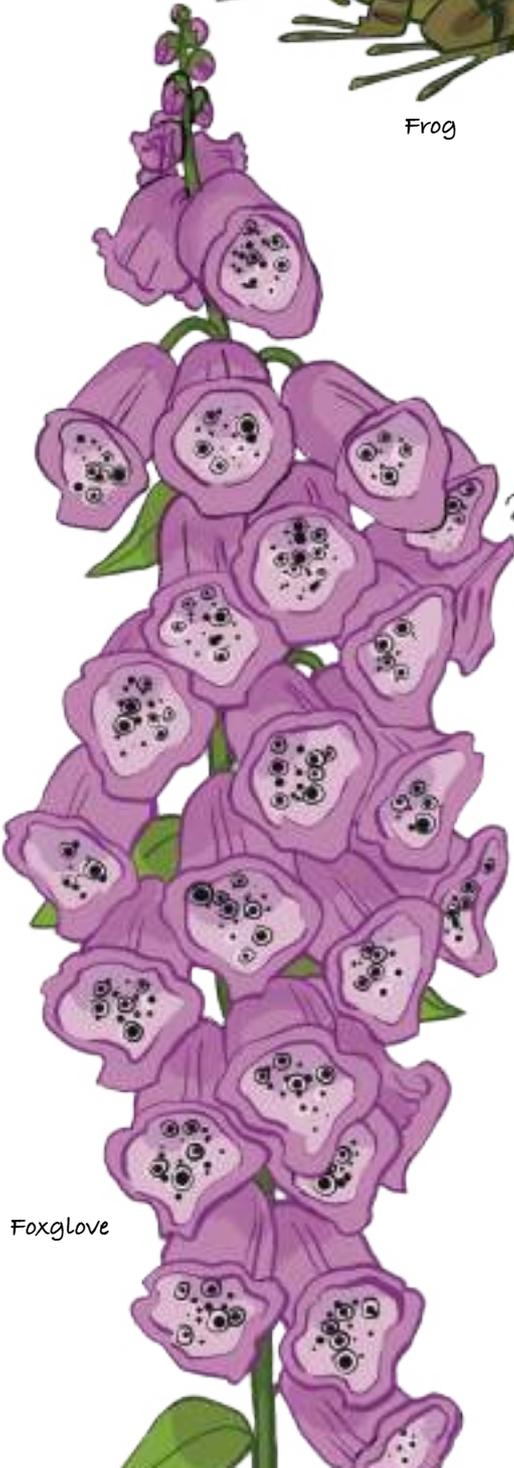
Frog



Common Pipistrelle Bat



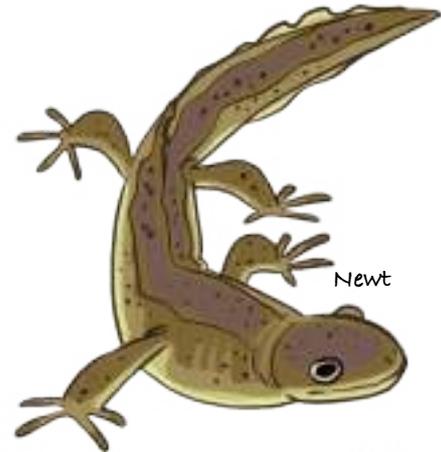
Moth



Foxglove



Bumblebee



Newt



Daisy



Hawthorn  
Shieldbug



Centipede



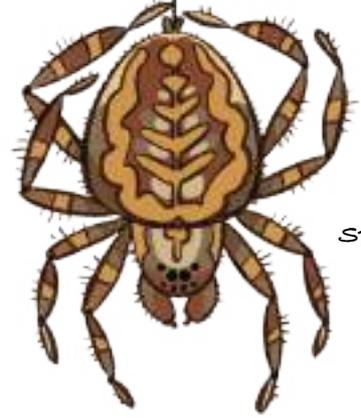
Wood louse



Millipede



7-spot ladybird



Spider



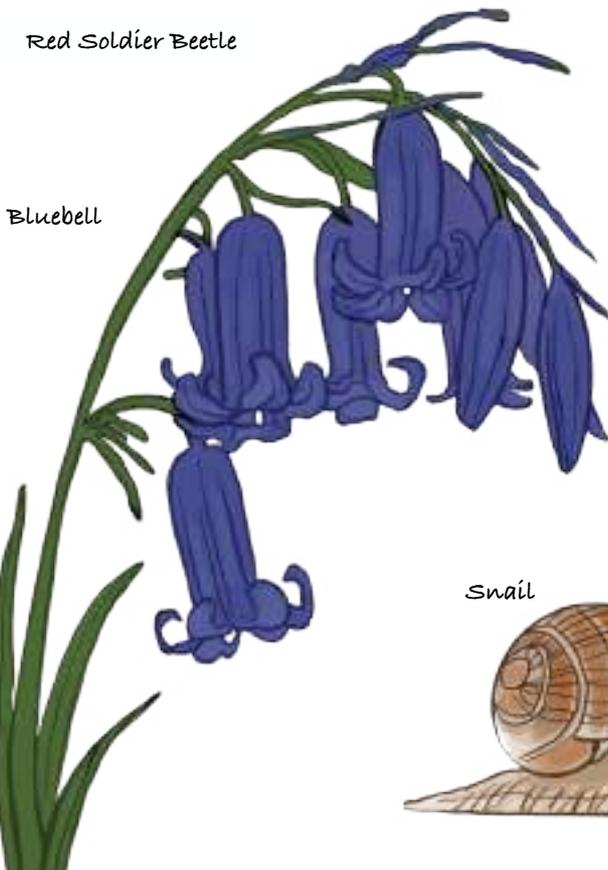
Red Soldier Beetle



Caterpillar



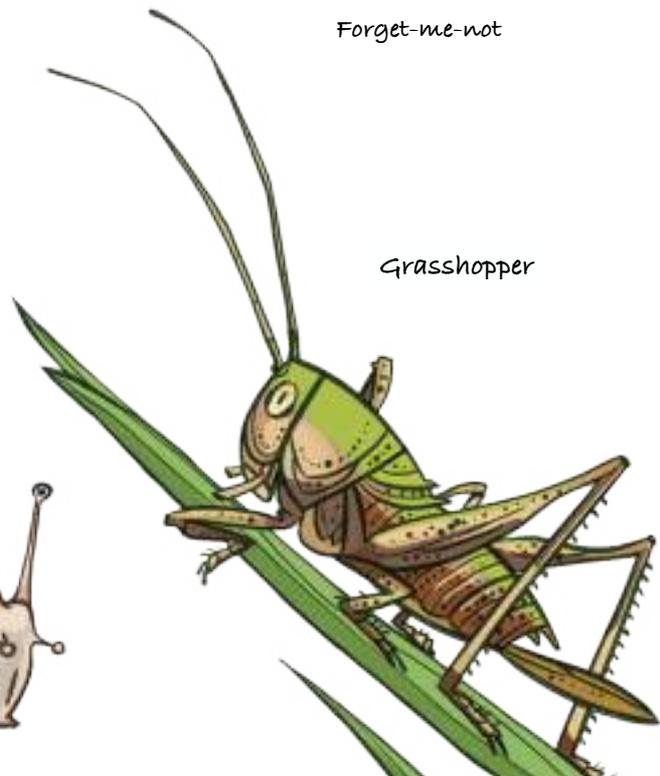
Forget-me-not



Bluebell



Snail



Grasshopper





This book is a companion to **Gardening for Biodiversity**, published in 2020, which can be downloaded from: <https://laois.ie/gardening-for-biodiversity/> A series of video tutorials on gardening for biodiversity are available at [youtube.com/laoisheritage](https://youtube.com/laoisheritage)