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Conifer Woodlands

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Conifer Woodlands

When developing Honey Park the Cosgrave Team endeavoured not to destroy existing woodland which provides a habitat for local wildlife. Such destruction of woodlands in Ireland has contributed to a decline in populations of bats and other small mammals such as squirrels.

As well as preserving existing trees and the continued planting of new trees, Cosgraves have included bat boxes to try and encourage bats to roost here. It is also hoped that our endangered native Red Squirrel will be enticed to make its home in the coniferous trees that he favours. Coniferous trees are those that produce cones such as fir, pine and spruce trees. They are usually evergreen, with needles instead of the broad leaves of deciduous trees.



Bats

Pipistrellus Pygmaeus / Ialtóg Fheascrach

Ireland is currently home to nine species of bat. All our bats are totally harmless and are much smaller than people imagine.

All Irish bats eat insects, some prefer chunky beetles and moths while others, such as the pipistrelles catch large numbers of small flies and midges. During winter when insects are scarce, they hibernate.

Bats are not blind! They can see perfectly well, but in order to hunt tiny midges in the dark and to avoid colliding into obstacles, they rely on their hearing.



Bats emit an amazing range of high-pitched sounds well beyond our hearing range. These sounds bounce off objects and return to the bat as echoes that the bat uses to judge size, distance and speed. This system of 'seeing with sound' is called echolocation or sonar and is so accurate there is no way a bat will accidentally fly into your hair!

Bats live in a variety of places or 'roosts', both natural and man-made. However, they are becoming more dependent on buildings for roosting sites as their original roosts, such as trees often disappear.



In order to encourage bats to roost here at Honey Park we have included bat boxes in our conifer woodlands.



Conifer Woodlands



Squirrels

Red Squirrel / *Sciurus Vulgaris* / Iora Rua

Grey Squirrel / *Sciurus Carolinensis* / Iora Liath

There are two types of squirrels in Ireland, the Red Squirrel and the Grey Squirrel. The Red Squirrel is native to Ireland while the Grey Squirrel is native to North America.

Their home, called a drey, is like a large bird's nest lined with moss and twigs. Baby squirrels (kits) are born between February and August. There may be two litters in a year, with up to six kits in a litter.

A Red Squirrel is only half the size of a grey squirrel, and the long ear tufts are found only in Red Squirrels.

The Red Squirrel has undergone a widespread decline in numbers since the introduction of the grey squirrel to Ireland in 1911. The Grey Squirrel will out compete the red squirrel for resources in woodlands and eventually cause the decline and/or displacement of the Red Squirrel population.

The Red Squirrel's habit of hoarding stores of nuts and seeds is important to the ecosystem of forests as this activity spreads tree seeds over large areas at the vital time of Autumn.