

## Build a mammal tunnel

Credit: Kilkenny Education Centre, MISE Project

Mammals are very shy and therefore difficult to spot in nature. The MISE (Mammals in a Sustainable Environment) group, a mammal conservation group based in Waterford Institute of Technology, together with the Kilkenny Education Centre developed an activity to do at home to investigate the night time visitors to your school grounds.

Mammals are encouraged to walk through a homemade, prism-shaped tunnel – there are treats hidden inside and who doesn't love treats! As the mammal steps into the tunnel, it walks over some harmless black paint and leaves a footprint trail across a recording sheet. By examining the prints, you can tell who has visited.

You can find helpful information on a number of guides provided by the National Parks and Wildlife Services on [www.livingearth.ie](http://www.livingearth.ie)

Test your knowledge of the 12 Irish mammals with the Wexford Wildfowl Reserve's online quiz and see how you get on: <https://www.wexfordwildfowlreserve.ie/activities/bealtaine-living-earth-festival-2020/>



*A mammal tunnel and its recording sheet showing clear footprints. Photos: MISE.*

## **What you need**

Cardboard

Cutter

Black paint

White paper (regular A4 paper works well)

Duct tape

Treats for the animals you want to lure through the tunnel: dog food is often a good alternative and can attract a number of different animals. Do your research before starting the project and find out what each animal likes to eat! **DO NOT USE ANYTHING HARMFUL!!!**

## **What to do**

1. Make a prism-shaped tunnel of about 1 m length. The height depends on the type of animal: research the size of the animal before starting and make sure the walls of the tunnel are high and wide enough for it to easily fit through. For a hedgehog, for example, each wall and the floor should be about 20 to 30 cm in height/width.  
To make it easier, use either the length or the width of an A4 sheet of paper – the same that later serves as your recording sheet – to measure the width of the floor and the height of each wall.  
Keep in mind that your prism-shaped tunnel is basically a 3D isosceles triangle.
2. Before taping the sides together. Cover the floor of the tunnel with blank recording sheets and fix them with duct tape around the edges.
3. Put some dog food (or another treat) into the middle of the tunnel. Be careful to not use anything that may cause harm!).
4. Spread some black paint on both sides of the food but leave a 5 to 10 cm gap between the treats and the paint so that the paint does not contaminate the food.
5. Now duct tape the two sides together to form a prism-shaped tunnel.
6. Carefully place it close to a hedge or into the shrubs in your garden, a park or near woodlands and leave it there for the night.
7. Get up early the next morning, open the tunnel and see what prints have been left!  
Can you identify them?
8. Make sure to clean your tunnel after each use and always use new food when putting it out again. You might need some patience: some animals need a while to get used to this new object before walking in.