

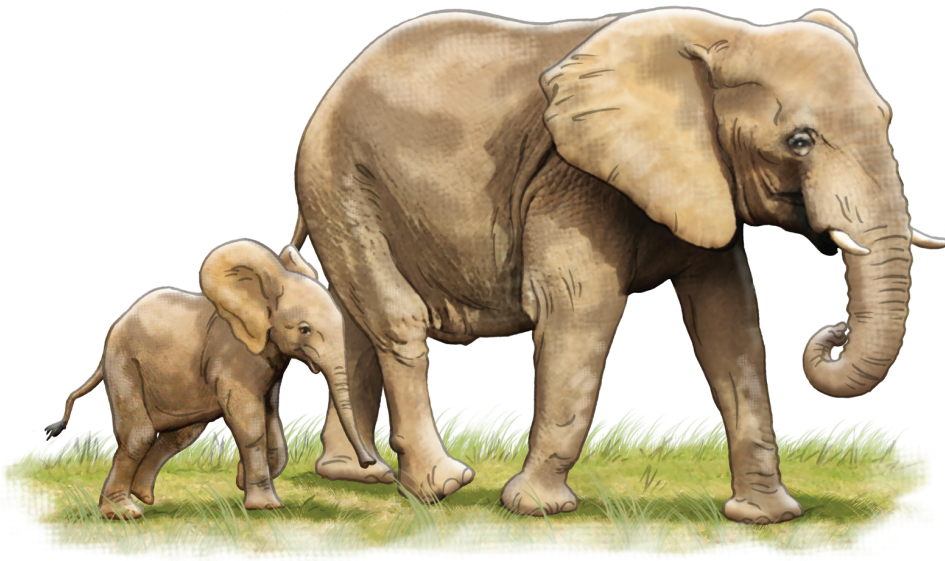
Different life cycles

The **life cycle** of an animal describes how it reproduces and what happens to the young until they are ready to reproduce themselves.

Mammal life cycles

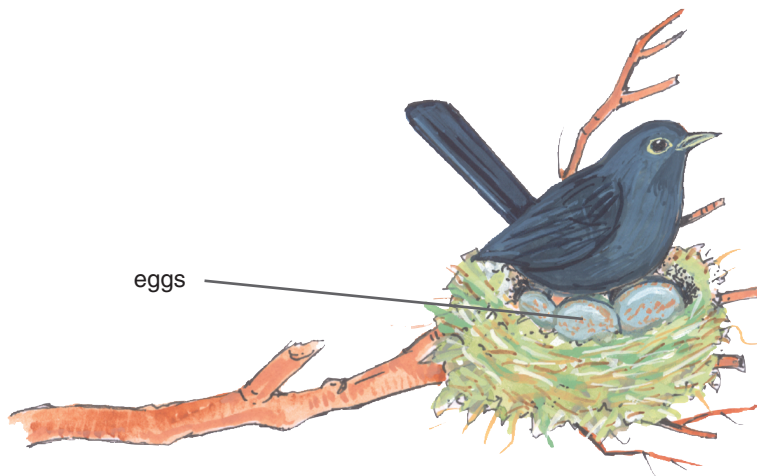
Humans are **mammals**. A human baby grows inside its mother for nine months before it is born. When it is small, a baby can be fed milk made by its mother. A human child needs to be looked after for many years before it is old enough to have babies of its own.

The life cycles of other mammals are similar, but may take different times. A baby elephant grows inside its mother for nearly two years before it is born. A mother elephant usually only has one baby at a time. A mother cat can have up to ten kittens at once and they only grow inside her for about two months.



Bird life cycles

Baby **birds** hatch from eggs. The egg contains food for the growing baby bird. The parent birds must keep their eggs warm, which they do by sitting on the nest. The baby birds need to be fed by their parents until they have grown enough to be able to fly and find food for themselves.



Baby mammals usually look very similar to their parents. Baby birds, however, do not look quite like their parents because they have fluffy feathers, but they are the same basic shapes. Some other groups of animals have young that look completely different from the adults.