



Green woodpecker

'Laughing Betsey', 'yaffing gale', 'yucle and yaffle' are all old English folk names given to this exotic looking woodpecker describing its rubbery, chuckling, laughter like call. Belting out a raucous kyu-kyu-kyu-kyuck! Consisting of around 10 notes slightly descending in tone.

zone
3

hear me

All year close to small wooded areas with open grassland where plenty of ants and small beetles can be found. This explosive sound usually accompanies take off.

sounds
easy to find

Skylarks Nature Reserve



zone
2, 7

Dawn chorus

Away from tropical rain forests, bird song doesn't get more spectacular than the dawn chorus here in the UK. Starting at least an hour before sunrise the first bird chimes a light through the darkness, usually the familiar, melodic, throaty tones of a blackbird, then the delicate piping musicality of the robin. These are followed by the cascading repeated sentences of the song thrush, the piercing, rattling volume of the wren

hear me

and many variations of warbler song. Broadcasting in the still half-light before dawn, reduces the probability of predation, and allows the song to travel further. As early as April, the first of the chorus to sing are the residents such as blackbirds and robins. These are later joined in song by migrants such as blackcaps and whitethroats in May, making spring and early summer the peak time to hear this beautiful cacophony. In wooded areas, the first to sing will start to warm up around 3am when it is still dark and the first hint of light is waking up in the east.



zone
2, 4, 5, 6

Reeds

Technically speaking the wind has no sound, it is silent until it blows through or around something. The sound of the reeds is ever present on the reserve, a gentle summer breeze caressing the lush green stems and leaves creates a similar soothing effect to the gentle movement of water shushing up and down a shingle beach, alternatively in autumn when the reeds are dry and the wind stronger, the reeds generate the white noise of heavy rainfall which swallows all other sounds. In stark contrast, when all is frosty silence, the soft fragile pitter patter of the first snowflakes on the broken dead reeds can be quietly intense.

hear me

All year producing an array of swishing, swirling sounds, listen also amongst the reeds for plops and grumbling croaks from frogs, or the rattle of a dragonflies wings as they clip the stems and leaves.

Nottinghamshire

Wildlife Trust



zone
1, 2



Dragonfly wings

'Horse stingers' and 'Devils darning needles', or dragonflies and damselflies as we know them now, are abundant at Skylarks Nature Reserve over the late spring and summer months. There have been 14 species recorded over the years, hawkers, chasers, darters and demoiselles fizzing around the ponds, reed beds and woody clearings, all hunting prey, looking for a mate or holding onto a territory. The fragile paper thin sound of a dragonflies wings as they sparkle past, is reminiscent of the sound made when running a thumb across the closed pages of a book. A sound of supreme delicacy and power, wings which are capable of generating 6 directions of flight, forward, left, backward, up, right and down, with forward speeds reaching up to 100 body lengths a second.

hear me

Crackling around the tops of reed beds as wing tips, of which there are 4, clip leaves with a sound akin to a croupier's fancy card shuffle.

Red fox

Facial expressions, scent marking and vocalisations are all ways in which a fox communicates, it is now believed that they have a repertoire of at least 28 different barks, yelps, warbles, shrieks and a chattering chirrup known as 'gekking' which is mostly heard in winter during the mating season. This is a time when foxes make a lot of noise, the male will blast sharp, explosive barking screams as a warning to other males in the area, the female will announce her availability by shrieking in a way so bloodcurdlingly human that it has been known to result in the police being called.

hear me

On cold December evenings when the stillness and lack of foliage allows for the shrieks and screams to travel some distance.

sounds hard to find

Skylarks Nature Reserve

Lapwing



zone
4, 5, 6

On crisp winter days, flocks of lapwings fly between islands and pasture with a vague, lazy flight, their rounded oversized paddle-like wings beat with a shallow flap. When flying into the wind this can make them appear almost stationary, upon turning, the wind yanks each bird from the flock as if blown from the seedhead of a dandelion,

some drop into steep, rolling tumbles, others battle to regain stability and then paddle back into the current again.

These flights are always accompanied by the pleading melancholy call that describes this beautiful plover's alternative name 'Peewit'.

hear me

Calling 'chee-o-wip' from islands, scrapes and grazed fields all year round, or from circling flocks in the autumn and winter months.

all
zones

sounds

a **real** find

Skylarks Nature Reserve



Wasp

zone
1, 2, 7

©Mike Snelle

Practicing stillness, silence and patience in a woodland can reward you with some of the most exciting, surprising and memorable wildlife experiences. In summer allow your ears to filter out the larger sounds of leaves whispering over a breeze, or a jay squawking its disapproval of a passing sparrowhawk, and open them to the smaller noises, a dor beetle clumsily rustling a path through last year's leaf litter or even the persistent 'chomp-chomp' of a wasp gnawing on bark. There are approximately 9,000 species of wasp in the UK, 9 of which are social and build nests, crafted

hear me

In late spring and summer manufacturing paper for nest construction by munching on dead wood. This sound is quite audible, but cupping your hands behind your ears can really help you home in on this behaviour.

from paper made from chewed up wood pulp mixed with saliva. Layers of paper are used to form waterproof hexagonal chambers where larvae can develop safe from predators.

The hypnotic, swirling ebb and flow of a starling murmuration, swelling and rippling across a fading blue autumn dusk is one of the most moving and awe inspiring spectacles that you could ever wish to experience in the natural world. Gathering in these mesmerising displays is mainly for protection against predators, primarily peregrine falcons and sparrowhawks that find it difficult to target single birds in the churning confusion.

Passing overhead the 'whoosh' of thousands of wings fades in and out like the sound from an approaching storm blowing through trees, on turning, the whole mass of birds violently

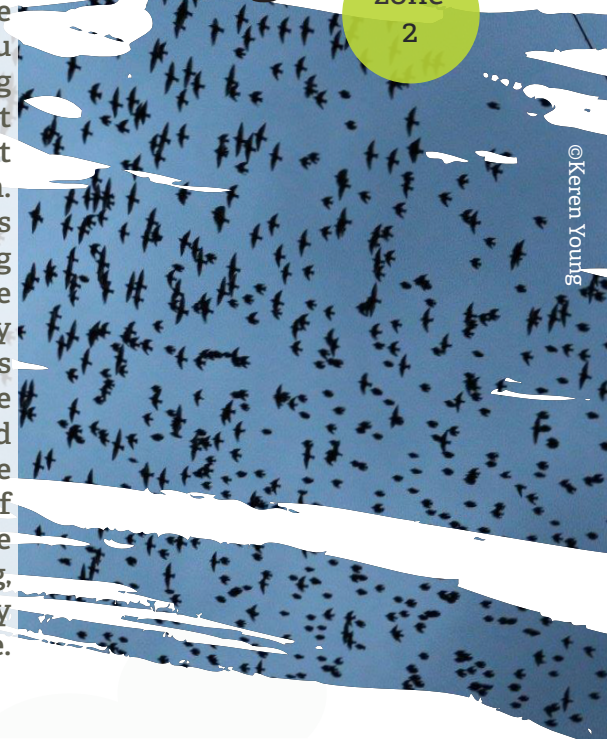
hear me

Just before autumn and winter twilight above reed beds where a regular roost has been established, pockets of birds arrive from different directions to join the swirling mass, before settling amongst the reeds where sparrowhawks flash to grab a quick meal before nightfall.

'shash!!' This later becomes a steady 'Shhhh' when the throng is eventually sucked into the reed bed, sounding like dry rice poured from a sheet of newspaper. Once settled the noisy twittering, chattering, whistling, bubbling cacophony can go on for some time.

Starlings

zone
2



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Common sexton beetle

A corpse lies on the ground but will soon be 60cm under it thanks to a little help from nature's undertakers. The common sexton beetle is 3cm long, has a stocky square shape with bold orange and black stripes on the wing casings. Upon finding the corpse of a small mammal or bird, a male and female will join forces to fiercely defend their carrion prize, they will strip it of feathers and hairs, meticulously cleaning it before digging underneath to finally bury it, but laid to rest it is not. The couple's eggs are laid on or close to the body which will act as food for the hatched larvae. In battles defending carrion, or in defence against a predator, a sharp rasping hiss is produced, much like the release of air from a tyre when the valve is depressed.

all
zones



hear me

In pairs on the dead remains of small mammals or birds. If more than two beetles are in attendance then a battle may ensue. On contact a menacing hissing fizz is produced.