

## May: International Dawn Chorus Day



International Dawn Chorus Day is the first Sunday in May, so this year it's on the third. The RSPB and Wildlife Trusts are running dawn chorus events up and down the country, but all you really need to do is wake up early – around 4.30 – open the window and then pop back into bed. Dawn choruses are different from place to place as they reflect the different birds found in different habitats. I've read of this combination of bird songs described as a local chords, chords that change as you move between woodland and field, mountain and coast, but also as waves of chords that move around the world as it spins and dawn arrives in each new east.

There are several reasons why so many birds sing at dawn – the stillness and relative quiet means sound travels much further, so whether proclaiming your territory or attracting a mate it's a good time to sing. In spring, many migrant birds fly in overnight so for them and for the locals there's an extra competitive edge. And it's probably too early and dark to go looking for food yet, so why not?

The birds you might hear in the churchyard include:

- Woodpigeon – *woo WOO woo, woo-woo*
- Collared dove – *wo oWOO woo*
- Green woodpecker – *yaffling laugh*
- Magpie – rattling *chukka chukka chuk*
- Rook – *caw* (bit higher than crow)
- Carrion Crow – *caw caw* (lower than rook)
- Jackdaw – *jack jack*
- Coal Tit – *tseep tseep*
- Blue Tit – *tseep tseep*
- Great Tit – *teach-er!*
- Chiffchaff – high pitched *chiff-chaff*
- Blackcap – long waterfall of trills
- Wren – explosive trilling
- Willow warbler – short descend warble
- Starling – squawks and then mimic
- Blackbird – deep, fluty, 'mellow'
- Song Thrush – 2-4 repeats each different
- Mistle Thrush
- Robin – rich phrases in a minor key
- House Sparrow – chirping
- Dunnock – piping song
- Greenfinch – trilling, scratchy *eeeeek*
- Chaffinch – 10 notes phrase then pause
- Goldfinch – twinkling trills
- Nuthatch – peeping



The RSPB has an [online birdsong identifier](#) to help with the 15 most common bird songs in gardens and parks, and if you really get into it, there's always the [Merlin app](#) for your phone.

As the light increases you might see and hear swallows, martins and maybe even swifts (although I've not seen them in the village yet) hunting insects as they rise from the grass and trees, and later still, as the sun heats up and the thermals rise, see some mewing red kites. Sometimes you can hear great spotted woodpeckers hammering on trees. Other birds such as long tailed tits and wagtails might be about, but probably not heard above the rest of the avian orchestra.

And if you are lucky, you might even hear a cuckoo – they've been in the valley for a week or so!



Read more about our [churchyard wildlife on our web pages](#)