

Dawn Chorus in Paradise Nature Reserve

On Sunday May 14th, I arranged a dawn chorus walk in Paradise, to start at 4.30 am. Rising at 4.00 am for a quick mug of tea and half a bowl of cereal, I found **Robin** and **Crow** were already calling at 4.10. Leaving the house at 4.20, I met a surprised cat who tried to persuade me to return to give him his breakfast. He was disappointed.

Along the road, a **Blackbird** started singing at 4.22, then a **Wood Pigeon** and **Song Thrush**. Arriving in the car park at 4.30, I was joined by Ruth, Helen, Tess and Alan. As we listened to the Robin there, a reddish brown **Fox** materialised in the half light, trotted determinedly over the car park and disappeared across the bridge and into Sheep's Green. I learned that the cubs were being raised under the shed in the Croft School garden. Robin's song is economical – short phrases, long pauses, wistful, varied, tuneful. There was a **Moorhen** alarm-calling from the river, but it was not clear what the problem was. Perhaps it was us.

[https://www.xeno-canto.org/sounds/uploaded/VROUALCTKG/XC619952-European Robin \(song, BE, Rozenbroeken, 6feb2021, 2\).mp3](https://www.xeno-canto.org/sounds/uploaded/VROUALCTKG/XC619952-European Robin (song, BE, Rozenbroeken, 6feb2021, 2).mp3)

Robin

<https://www.british-birdsongs.uk/common-wood-pigeon/>

Wood Pigeon

Entering the reserve, we startled a pair of **Pheasants**, who flew off with a clatter. Having settled, and regaining dignity, he gave his double clack, followed by wing shake to re-establish his rights. We listened there for a while, but Blackbird and Song Thrush were in competition, with apparently a **Wren** in every direction. Combined with Robin and **Blackcap**, it was all very confusing and we moved on to try and separate them.

<https://www.british-birdsongs.uk/pheasant/>
[4 https://www.xeno-canto.org/sounds/uploaded/ITHRUQEQCF/XC626148-Scricciolo%20song_0303_1828.mp3](https://www.xeno-canto.org/sounds/uploaded/ITHRUQEQCF/XC626148-Scricciolo%20song_0303_1828.mp3)

Pheasant

Wren

Wrens were easily the commonest birds in the reserve. We heard many, though we did not see one. A long phrase, containing many notes and at least one episode of buzzing trill makes them one of the easiest to learn. There is then a pause and repeat. There seemed to be a new one every 100 yards or so.

Song Thrush takes a little time to understand: he has about 30 – 40 small phrases, each of which is repeated 2-10 times, before moving to the next. “Tic, tic, tic, tic, tiaoop, tiaoop, tiaoop, tiaoop, tiaoop, few, few, few, few, few, few, few, few, few” gives you some idea of the pattern. The best place for him was the meadow area, by the pond. Blackbird, on the other hand, has a longer phrase, a mellow alto in pitch becoming squeaky at the end, which is followed by a pause : the next phrase is never quite the same. There were several singing, the best at the back, on the boardwalk. Both birds are loud concert performers and go on for a long time.

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/song-thrush> Song Thrush

<https://www.british-birdsongs.uk/common-blackbird/>

Blackbird

We came to the magnificent flowers of the **Horse Chestnut** tree, glowing like white candles in the half-light. Interestingly, the lower flowers turn pink once they have been pollinated, as a signal to pollinators to move a little higher up the candle. There was no sign yet of the leaf miners, which turn the leaves brown and tattered. Ruth asked if I would do a tree walk sometime, but not at 4.30am.



One bird missing at the moment was the normally common Blue Tit. I think 2022 was a difficult year for them. However, at 5.15, we heard the squeaky notes of a **Great Tit**, followed by the double note of the **Chiffchaff**. Interesting to hear both together, as they can be confused. Chiffchaff is much more deliberate and less squeaky: chiff chaff chiff chaff chiff chaff.

<https://www.british-birdsongs.uk/eurasian-great-tit/>

Great Tit

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/chiffchaff/>

Chiffchaff

Heading back down the boardwalk, an unexpected arrival at 5.20. A **Green Woodpecker** landed high in a tree with a typical Yaffle call of maniacal laughter! Lastly at 5.41 we heard the Wu-wump, Wu-wump of the **Stock Dove**, a smaller relative of Wood Pigeon without the white patches on neck and wings. No sign today of the White Stork which has been around for the last couple of weeks.

<https://www.british-birdsongs.uk/stock-pigeon/>

Stock Dove

<https://www.xeno-canto.org/sounds/uploaded/QAJPWEPSTL/XC625305-gr%C3%BCnsp0644.mp3>

Green Woodpecker

Out of the wood and on the way home at 5.49, I heard **Collared Dove**, **Jackdaw** and **Goldfinch**. Returning to the house, I slept until eight when Sam finally got his breakfast. My thanks to the party for getting out of bed for it. Someone said it was a memory to treasure for a lifetime.

Olwen Williams