

WORKSHEET 4

Skylark & Cuckoo, Poetry and Music

Get inspired in birds and the sounds they make! Badbury Rings is home to some of Britain's most celebrated birds, the Skylark, and the Cuckoo, who sometimes likes to visit.

Use this activity sheet to go and observe them on Badbury Rings, then enjoy listening to how they have been celebrated by musicians and poets throughout history.

CURRICULUM LINKS

KS1 - Discovering animals

KS2 - Learning about endangered species

KS1 and 2 - Making a difference by protecting wildlife.

GOOD TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- ➔ May is a good time to watch the skylarks but please stick to the footpaths to protect the birds. Follow the National Trust Code of
- ➔ Conduct for the Rings
- ➔ Be prepared for ticks
- ➔ The Red Devon cows are said to be very docile

ACTIVITY

Takes place on Badbury Rings

KIT TO TAKE WITH YOU

- ✓ Binoculars (not that necessary!)
- ✓ Anti-tick repellent

THE SKYLARK

The Skylark is a ground nesting bird and needs a quiet natural grassland to breed. It has an unusual song and a distinctive flight, singing whilst suspended in the air. Sadly the bird is an endangered species, due to changes in farming, which have reduced the Skylark's ability

to breed and survive through the winter on UK farmland. The natural grassland habitat at Badbury has encouraged them to nest, and here, numbers are increasing!





**Hear the Skylark before
you go to Badbury:**

[www.youtube.com/
watch?v=rBp1Q_bHe0Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBp1Q_bHe0Y)

How to observe the Skylark

Stick to the footpaths when you come to see the Skylark, it is best not to walk over their breeding ground. As soon as you get near them at least one will ascend from their nest, upwards, and hover in the air, singing. The birds do this to scare predators away from the nest. You may then see the Skylark descending, parachute like, at an angle, to another location, attracting the predator towards themselves, and away from their young.

Read Percy Shelley's poem, published in 1820:

TO A SKYLARK PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

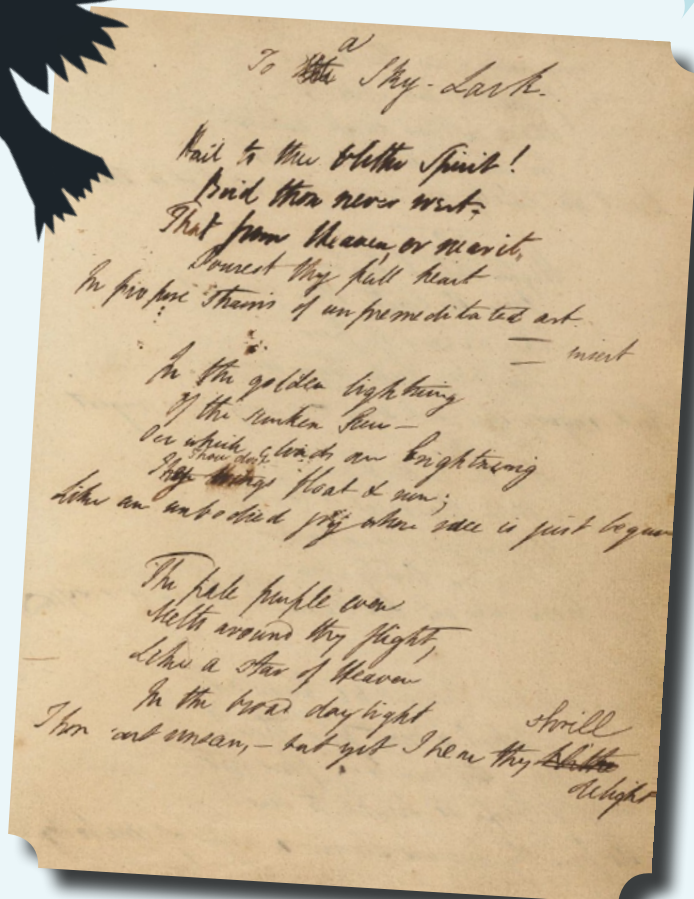
Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of
unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and
soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is
just begun.



CHALLENGE:
Can you read Percy
Shelley's handwriting?



LISTEN TO SOME SONGS INSPIRED BY THE SKYLARK.

What melodies and instrument are used to imitate the bird?

'SKYLARK' by Ella Fitzgerald:

youtu.be/mQ3KnRzxIBg?si=aF_nWjZ6xpnyRZaP

'SKYLARK' by Nina Simone:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnuQ2rFu30M

THE CUCKOO

After April you might hear the Cuckoo. Go to the centre of Badbury, close your eyes, and listen carefully... How many different bird calls can you hear? If you're very lucky you may hear the soft singsong call of the Cuckoo. This bird migrates from Africa, arriving in England around April and leaving again in June. It likes to inhabit the edges of woodlands, and it has been heard on the banks of the River Stour between Shapwick and Spetisbury.



You can hear the cuckoo here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTY26k0CA0I

The Cuckoo is also an endangered species with very few visiting the UK nowadays. It is unclear why this is.

The Cuckoo has some interesting behaviours. Find out more at www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/animals/birds/cuckoo/ and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Cuckoo_%28song%29

Read William Wordsworth's poem,
published in 1807...

TO THE CUCKOO

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

O blithe New-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice?

While I am lying on the grass
Thy twofold shout I hear;
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off, and near.

Though babbling only to the Vale
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.



The rest of the poem is at
www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45562/to-the-cuckoo#:~:text=To%20the%20Cuckoo%20by%20William%20Wordsworth%207C%20Poetry%20Foundation

LISTEN TO MUSIC FEATURING THE CUCKOO...

THE CUCKOO IN THE DEPTHS OF THE WOODS, in 'The Carnival of the Animals',
by **Camille Saint-Saens**: www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4lI80_QpUI

Benjamin Britten's Friday Afternoons, '**A CEREMONY OF CAROLS**':
www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTMLWuY36KQ (choral version)
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbQyFZmuA58&list=RDcbQyFZmuA58&start_](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbQyFZmuA58&list=RDcbQyFZmuA58&start_radio=1)
[radio=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbQyFZmuA58&list=RDcbQyFZmuA58&start_radio=1) (Cosmo Sheldrake)

'HANSEL AND GRETEL', an opera by **Englebert Humperdinck**:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-3ueehBKXQ

And, just for an amazing theatrical treat, watch 5 minutes of '**HANSEL AND GRETEL**' by the **Royal Opera House**: www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbhmFQ03xPk

FURTHER EXPLORATIONS...

More British birdsong can be heard here:

www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/bird-song-identification-common-garden-birds.html?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiArfauBhApEiwAeoB7qNw6peEciQ-EJztavwmmv0W6mvX2rwH-KqUiLaJRProZFFu894VBjhoCQkQQAvD_BwE

See an instrument used to imitate birdsong in China...

www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDRJXD5W50s

ACTIVITY

**If you're feeling inspired,
write a poem, or a song
about the birds, plants
and animals on
Badbury Rings.**

