



Activity of the month March



Make a bird ID dial and sound map

In spring time, as the mornings steadily become lighter, they also become louder as the dawn chorus begins! This is when birds can be heard singing together early in the morning, starting about an hour before the sun rises until about an hour after. Of course, they can still be heard throughout the day and they also take part in a quieter evening chorus.

So why do they sing? Although it may sound to us like they are doing it for fun, there is a purpose for it. Spring is the time when birds build their nests and lay their eggs. To do this they need a mate, so the male bird sings to attract one and let other birds in the area know to stay away from his territory!



Listen out for birds on the Downs and make your own sensational bird sound map. Try to name or identify any you spot with our Downs bird ID (identification) dial. Here are some of the birds you might see and hear.



© Kathi Held

Great spotted woodpecker

Clings to tree trunks using its stiff tail feathers for support.

Call: 'chip chip chip'

Size: 22-23cm

Eats: beetle grubs, other insects, seeds and nuts.



© Kathi Held

Long-tailed tit

Seen in large flocks which fly from tree to tree.

Call: 'see see see'

Size: 14 cm

Eats: insects and spiders.



© Kathi Held

Robin

Likes shady areas with moist ground. Often comes close to people.

Song: sweet slow song

Size: 14 cm

Eats: invertebrates, fruits and seeds.



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Great tit

Lives anywhere with trees.

Song: 'teacher-teacher'

Size: 14 cm

Eats: invertebrates, seeds and fruit .



You will need ...

- thin white card or paper
- scissors
- a pen
- blue-tac
- a split pin



How to make the Downs birds ID dial

1. Print out the ID (identification) dial discs onto card or paper.

2. Carefully cut around the outside edges of both of the circular discs. For the smaller one, carefully cut around the tip of the arrow and into the triangular gap.



3. Make a hole in the centre of both discs (where there is a cross mark). It is easiest to do this by pushing the tip of a pen through the card into some blue-tac.



4. Push the split pin through the hole of the smaller disc first and then the larger disc. Turn them over and open the split pin to secure both discs together. You should now have a fully-functioning Downs birds ID dial.



To find the best places to see and hear birds on the Downs and find out more about what's there, download our Downs Bird Trail leaflet from the 'Visiting Us' section of our website:
www.avongorge.org.uk
Or you can pick up a copy from the Downs Café before you go to find them.

How to use the ID dial:
When you spot a bird, simply turn the centre disc until the arrow is pointing at the bird you have spotted. The name of the bird will appear in the gap!

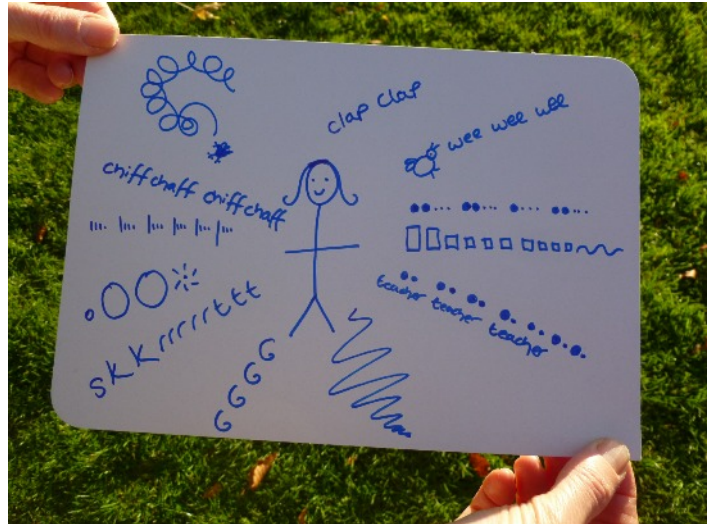


You will need ...

- a piece of sturdy cardboard
- a pen or felt tip
- listening ears
- patience!

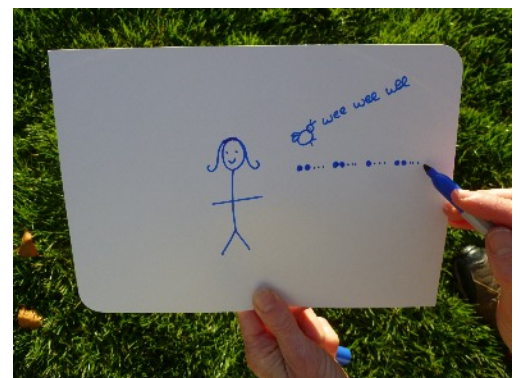


How to draw the bird sound map



1. Find a quiet spot to wait in where there aren't too many 'human' sounds, such as traffic. Look for somewhere with some trees and bushes nearby where there may be birds perching in the branches.
2. On your card, draw yourself as a stick person in the middle.
3. Stay very still and listen carefully. Don't make a noise or talk or the birds will fly away! You may need to wait a little while for the birds to get used to you being there - this may require some patience.

4. When you hear a bird call or sing, what sound does it make? Think of a symbol or word to represent the sound. Where did the sound come from? Draw your symbol in that position on your card. For example, if the sound was to your right side, draw it on the right side of your stick person. You can use dots and dashes, squiggles and swirls, words, plus any other designs you can think of!



5. Continue to do this using a variety of symbols. Which is your favourite sound?



Now you've got used to hearing all the different birds around you, see if you can spot them and use your ID dial to find out what they are called.

