



NB: This is not a word for word transcript

## BIRDS SINGING

- Rob:** Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English with me, Rob, and a very beautiful sound...
- Jen:** Ahhh, the sound of birdsong. Hello, I'm Jennifer and that's what we're talking about today – birdsong.
- Rob:** In Britain, this is the sound of summer – lots of different **species** – or types – of birds **tweeting**.
- Jen:** Tweeting? You mean they are using Twitter – the social media site?!
- Rob:** Of course not! Tweeting is a way of describing the sounds birds make. We sometimes say they **chirp** or **trill** too – making short, high-pitched sounds.
- Jen:** Yes, I knew that really. But a BBC radio station in the UK is playing a different birdsong every day. They're calling it 'Tweet of the Day' – which is a clever title.
- Rob:** It is and we'll talk more about that soon. But first I need to see if you are a **twitcher** – another name for a person who watches birds for a hobby. Do you know how many species of birds there are on Britain's official bird list?
- a) 396
  - b) 496
  - c) 596
- Jen:** Wow, there are lots but I have no idea so I will guess a) 396.
- Rob:** That is quite a lot, isn't it? We'll find out if you are right at the end of the programme. So, let's talk more about tweeting – of the bird kind. Where I live, there are many fields and trees and there is nothing more beautiful – and noisy – than the sound of the **dawn chorus**.
- Jen:** That's when all the birds start singing at sunrise – so first thing in the morning. It's not so beautiful if you are trying to sleep! But I know what you mean about

birdsong – it makes you think about different places. Listen to this birdsong, for example...

### SEAGULL SOUND FX

**Rob:** Yes, the seagull - a **scavenger** which eats food scraps or other dead animals.

**Jen:** Yes, it reminds me of the seaside, although I wouldn't describe that as a beautiful sound – more of a **screech**. Let's hear another sound from one of our **feathered friends** – or in other words, birds...

### BLACKBIRD SOUND FX

**Rob:** That's the call of a blackbird – something I hear in my back garden. It's a very distinctive song – easy to recognise and something you hear a lot of in the British summer.

**Jen:** And how about this bird – what does it make you think of?

### CUCKOO SOUND FX

**Rob:** That has to be a cuckoo – its call sounds like its name – 'cuckoo'. It reminds me of springtime because that's when you first hear them. It's incredible that there are so many different birdsongs.

**Jen:** Well, that's why BBC Radio 4's Tweet of the Day features 265 different birdsongs. Sound engineers have been outside and **captured** – or recorded - the sounds of birds with strange names like the wood warbler, nightjar, lesser whitethroat and yellowhammer.

**Rob:** Great names. But listening to these strange-named birds may be enjoyable but their tweeting could also be useful.

**Jen:** That's right. Sound experts say some birdsongs can help you concentrate when you're studying.

**Rob:** Yes, a writer called Julian Treasure says birdsong can relax the body and make your mind more alert. He thinks the dawn chorus is like **nature's alarm clock** – 'it stimulates us cognitively' – so gets our brains working and thinking.

**Jen:** Another study found the natural sounds of birdsong might stop you getting tired and sleepy after eating a meal. An experiment found playing birdsong to school children after lunch made them more alert. We should try it here Rob.

**Rob:** We should. There's even a smartphone app that plays birdsong and claims to help you work better. But there's no need for an app, all I need to do is open the window and listen to the birds outside...

## **BIRDS SINGING**

**Rob:** ...but are they all of the bird species I asked you about earlier? My question was how many species of birds are there on Britain's official bird list?

- a) 396
- b) 496
- c) 596

**Jen:** I said a) 396.

**Rob:** Sorry Jen, you're wrong. Incredibly there are 596 types of species in Britain. 286 of them are **rare** – so not many of them left. OK Jen, there's just time to remind us of some of the vocabulary that we heard today:

**Jen:** We heard...

**species**

**tweeting**

**chirp**

**twitcher**

**dawn chorus**

**scavenger**

**screech**

**feathered friends**

**captured**

**nature's alarm clock**

**rare**

**Rob:** Thanks. Time, now, for some more tweeting. Join us again soon for 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English.

**Both:** Bye.

## Vocabulary and definitions

species	types or sets of birds who have similar general features and can breed together
tweeting	here it means the songs or sounds that birds make
chirp or trill	short, high sound made by a bird
twitcher	someone who spots birds
dawn chorus	the sound of lots of birds singing at the start of the day
scavenger	bird that eats anything it can find
screech	loud, high pitched cry
feathered friends	birds
captured	collected or recorded
nature's alarm clock	a natural way to be woken up
rare	not found very often/ low in numbers

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