



In Fine Feather

*A musical hike
on the Hiroshi Loop Trail*

00:00 Common Cuckoo

The common cuckoo is a widespread summer migrant to Europe and Asia, arriving in April and leaving in September. Common cuckoos are brood parasites, laying their eggs in the nests of other bird species. The word *cuckold* derives from the cuckoo bird; in biology, a cuckold is a male which unwittingly invests parental effort in juveniles who are not genetically his offspring. The association is common in medieval folklore, literature, and iconography. The common cuckoo's song starts as a descending minor third early in the year in April, and as the season progresses the interval gets wider; in June the cuckoo "forgets its tune" and may make other calls such as ascending intervals.

0:11 "Summer is a comin' in"

Translation of the anonymous Medieval round "Sumer Is Icumen In" adapted by Jazimina MacNeil.

*Summer is a comin' in,
Loudly sing, cuckoo!
The seed is sprouting
And the meadow is blooming,
And the wood is leafing out-
Sing, cuckoo!*

*The ewe is bleating after her lamb,
The cow is lowing after her calf;
The bullock is prancing,
The billy-goat is farting-
Sing merrily, cuckoo!*

*Cuckoo, cuckoo,
You sing so well, cuckoo-
Never stop now!*

Sing, cuckoo, sing!

0:53 Sumer Is Icumen In, Anonymous

"Sumer Is Icumen In" is a traditional English medieval round, and possibly the oldest such example of counterpoint in existence, estimated to date from 1260. Listen for the song of the cuckoo when the refrain "Sing, cuckoo!" comes around, and feel free to hum along!

2:05 Yellow-billed cuckoo

Yellow-billed Cuckoos are slender, long-tailed birds that manage to stay well hidden in deciduous woodlands. They usually sit stock still, even hunching their shoulders to conceal their crisp white under parts, as they hunt for large caterpillars. Bold white spots on the tail's underside are often the most visible feature on a shaded perch. Fortunately, their drawn-out, knocking call is very distinctive.

2:17 Black-billed cuckoo

Uncommon and elusive, the Black-billed Cuckoo skulks around densely wooded eastern forests and thickets. Its staccato can be heard day and night, and if it pops into view, notice its red eye ring and small white tips on the underside of its tail feathers.

3:40 "Awake you slumbering hearts"

Translation of Clément Janequin's *Réveillez vous cueurs endormis* by Valérie Chaussonnet.

*Awake, you slumbering hearts,
The god of love summons you.
On this first day of May,
Birds will perform wonders
To put you in good cheer.
Take the wool from your ears.
And farirariron ferely joly.
You will all be filled with joy,
Let everyone abandon himself to it.*

*You will, at my command, hear sweet music
Made by the royal thrush (and the starling)
Singing in his true voice – ti ti pity tu –
What do you say, little starling of Paris
Little darling ... It's time to go drinking.*

*Guillemette, Colinette, it's time...
Get up, my lady, get you to the gossips' mass.
To the sermon, get you my mistress,
To Saint Troitin there to see Saint Robin,
And show your pretty breasts,
My sweet little musician.
Laughter and merrymaking, that's my motto,
Let everyone join in.*

*Nightingale in the fair wood
Resounding to your voice:
To put yourself in good cheer,
Your throat warbles in song.
Frian, frian ... Be gone regrets, complaints, and care,
For the season is good.*

*Away, Master Cuckoo,
Be gone from our company.
Everyone holds you in contempt,
For you are nothing but a traitor.
Cuckoo, cuckoo... Treacherously in every nest
You lay your egg without being invited.
Awake, you slumbering hearts,
The god of love summons you.*

4:18 European Starling

First brought to North America by Shakespeare enthusiasts in the 19th c, European Starlings are now among the continent's most numerous songbirds. They are fabulous mimics, and include all manner of man-made sounds, even speech, in their complex, jumbled songs. Mozart lived with a pet starling for three years; the story goes he came across the starling singing a theme from his most recent piano concerto in a pet shop, and he immediately brought the bird home to warmly welcomed the bird into his family.

4:41 American Robin

The quintessential early bird, American Robins are popular birds for their warm orange breast, cheery song, and early appearance at the end of winter. Though they're familiar town and city birds, American Robins are at home in wilder areas, too, including mountain forests and Alaskan wilderness.

4:57 Common Nightingale

The common nightingale is a small songbird best known for its powerful and beautiful song. During the summer it breeds in forest and scrub in Europe and the Palearctic, and winters in Sub-Saharan Africa. Common nightingales frequently sing at night as well as during the day, and they have long been used as a symbols of poets or their poetry, because of their creative and seemingly spontaneous song.

5:57 *Réveillez vous cueurs endormis*, by Clément Janequin

Clément Janequin (c. 1485 – 1558) was one of the most famous French composers of popular songs in the Renaissance; his songs were widely sung, and his fame was due in large part to the development of musical printing. He helped develop a new style of programmatic writing; his songs imitate the sounds of a battlefield, or women gossiping, or in this case, a cascading chorus of birds. Listen for all the different ways he asks the singers to be more bird than human!

11:28 Common Blackbird

The common blackbird breeds in Europe, Asiatic Russia, and North Africa. The adult male is all black except for a yellow eye-ring and bill, and has a rich, melodious song.

12:00 *Blackbird*, by The Beatles

"Blackbird" is a song by the English rock band the Beatles on their 1968 double album *The Beatles*. Paul McCartney has said that the lyrics were inspired by hearing the call of a blackbird in Rishikesh, India, and also by the struggles of the Civil Rights movement in the United States in the 1960s. The Beatles included audio of a blackbird singing at the end of their song; this is a lovely example of musicians inviting recorded birdsong into their music-making. Ottorino Respighi's *Pines of Rome* and Pink Floyd's *Grantchester Meadows* are two other wonderful examples.

14:46 Hermit Thrush

An unassuming bird with a lovely, melancholy song, the Hermit Thrush lurks in the understories of northern forests in summer. The song of the hermit thrush is renowned for its ethereal musicality and has attracted the attention of musicians and ornithologists for more than a century. Hermit Thrushes forage on the forest floor and will often hop and then stay still, peering at the ground. They sometimes pick up leaf litter with their bills or shake grass with their feet to find insects. When they're about to fly, they flick their wings or tails, and will sometimes cock their tails and bob them slowly, while flicking their wings.

16:03 Hermit Thrush At Eve, by Amy Beach

Amy Beach was born in Henniker, NH, in 1867 and before her death in 1944, composed about 300 works and became one of the most admired female composers in America. In the summer of 1921, during Beach's first of 18 MacDowell residencies, the composer became the first to transcribe the Hermit Thrush's beautiful song into musical notation, then incorporated it into two mystical works for piano, *A Hermit Thrush at Eve* and *A Hermit Thrush at Morn*. Composer Emily Dolittle writes that Beach "had cultivated since childhood a practice of transcribing birdsong: as someone with perfect pitch, an unusual ability to concentrate, and a great love of nature (including a preference for composing outdoors), she was especially well equipped to do so."

21:05 Wood Thrush

The Wood Thrush's loud, flute-clear *ee-oh-lay* song rings through the deciduous forests of the eastern U.S. in summer. This reclusive bird's cinnamon brown upperparts are good camouflage as it scrabbles for leaf-litter invertebrates deep in the forest, though it pops upright frequently to peer about, revealing a boldly spotted white breast.

21:16 "Wood Thrush" by Arthur A. Allen

From the Cornell Rural School Leaflet, May 1909, Vol.2, No.9

"Who has sat on the bank of a shaded glen or at the edge of a cool wood just as the shadows begin to lengthen and the bright light of day begins to take on the mellow tone of a May twilight? The little brook gurgles just out of sight, and water dripping from the rocks strikes the surface of a pool with a music that cannot be described. The silence seems broken only by these sounds and the murmur of the wind among the new born leaves.

Suddenly you become aware that other music is filling the woods. It has come to you so gradually, has been so much a part of the murmuring stream and dripping water that you have not noticed its beginning. All at once it forces itself upon your consciousness and you realize that you have been hearing it all the while. Now that you have noticed it, everything else sinks into insignificance and the top of the tall maple seems to resound with pure, rich, flute-like tones.

"Come—to—me" say the first few notes in the sweetest cadence, so deliberate, so majestic, so fully toned for the music of a bird, that we may truly call the author of it the king of songsters. This song we shall remember though we forget all others. It is that of the Wood Thrush."

22:54 *La Grive des bois*, by Olivier Messiaen

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) was a French composer, organist, and ornithologist, and one of the major composers of the 20th century. He was fascinated by birdsong, and traveled around the world to transcribe birdsong into musical notation, which he then incorporated into his music. "I have tried to render exactly the typical birdsong of a region, surrounded by its neighbors from the same habitat," he told biographer Claude Samuel. The birdsongs are also "accompanied in the harmonic and rhythmic material by the perfumes and colors of the landscape in which the bird lives." In addition to the song of the wood thrush, what other natural sounds do you hear translated by Messiaen into music?

27:44 White-throated Sparrow

Bold facial markings make the White-throated Sparrow an attractive bird, along with their pretty, wavering whistle of *Oh-sweet-canada-canada-canada*.

28:11 *Scene by the Brook*, from Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*

Beethoven was a great lover of nature who spent a great deal of his time on walks in the country. He frequently left Vienna to compose in rural locations, and the sights and sounds he absorbed during his walks found their way into his music. At the end of this movement listen for the nightingale (flute), the quail (oboe) and the cuckoo (clarinet) in trio with each other.

30:34 Song Sparrow

A rich, russet-and-gray bird with bold streaks down its white chest, the Song Sparrow is one of the most familiar North American sparrows. Males sing often, perching around eye level on exposed branches. Also watch for Song Sparrows moving along wetland edges, ducking into dense, low vegetation after short bursts of their distinctive, tail-pumping flight.

32:00 Common Yellowthroat

A broad black mask lends a touch of highwayman's mystique to the male Common Yellowthroat. Yellowthroats are vocal birds, and both their *witchety-witchety-witchety* songs and distinctive call notes help reveal their presence. When you hear one calling, look low in bushes and trees for a quick, small bird. If you don't spot one after a while, try making a "pishing" sound; Yellowthroats are inquisitive birds and often pop into the open to see who's making the sound.

32:53 Louisiana Waterthrush

The ringing song of the Louisiana Waterthrush, in cadence so like the rushing streams that are its home, is one of the first signs of spring in eastern North America. At all

seasons, this species stays close to moving water—especially forested streams and creeks—and bobs its rear end almost constantly. The specific name of Louisiana Waterthrush, *motacilla*, means “tail-wagger.”

35:06 Common Quail

The Common Quail is a small ground-nesting game bird in the pheasant family, widespread in Europe and North Africa. With its characteristic call of three repeated chirps (repeated three times in quick succession), this species of quail is more often heard than seen.

36:26 Northern Mockingbird

If you’ve been hearing an endless string of 10 or 15 different birds singing outside your house, you might have a Northern Mockingbird in your yard. These slender-bodied gray birds apparently pour all their color into their personalities. They sing almost endlessly, even sometimes at night; Northern Mockingbirds continue to add new sounds to their repertoires throughout their lives. A male may learn around 200 songs throughout its life.

36:39 “The Gift” by Mary Oliver

From House of Light, Beacon Press 1992.

*I wanted to thank the mockingbird for the vigor of his song.
Every day he sang from the rim of the field while I picked
blueberries, or just idled in the sun.
Every day he came fluttering by to show me, and why no, the white
blossoms in his wings.
So one day I went there with a machine, and played some songs of
Mahler.
The mockingbird stopped singing, he came close and seemed to
listen.
Now when I go down to the field, a little Mahler spills through the
sputters of his song.*

*How happy I am, lounging in the light, listening as the music floats
by!
And I give thanks also for my mind, that thought of giving a gift.
And mostly I’m grateful that I take this world so seriously.*

37:57 “In Praise of Great Intellect”

Translation by Jazimina MacNeil of Clemens Brentano & Gustav Mahler’s “Lob des Hohen Verstandes” from Des Knaben Wunderhorn.

*Once upon a time in a deep valley
The cuckoo and the nightingale
Made a bet:
They would hold a singing competition,
And whoever won, either by skill or by luck,
Would walk away with a grand prize.
The cuckoo said: “I have, if you please,
Already picked the judge,” and named the donkey straightaway.
“He has such large ears
He must be able to hear what’s absolutely awful,
And what’s terrifically good.”*

*So off they flew before the judge,
And when they told him about their bet,
He commanded them to sing.
The nightingale sang beautifully,
But the donkey said, “You’re confusing me.
You’re confusing me! Hee-haw! Hee-haw!
I just can’t understand it.”
Then the cuckoo quickly sang his song
Of thirds and fourths and fifths.*

*The donkey liked it, and merely said:
“Wait! Wait while I give my verdict.
Nightingale, you sang well,
But cuckoo, you sing a lovely hymn
And have such good rhythm.
My great intellect has spoken,
And even though it will cost an entire country,
I declare you the winner!
Cuckoo, cuckoo, hee-haw!”*

39:27 Lob des Hohen Verstandes, by G. Mahler

Gustav Mahler (1860 – 1911) was an Austro-Bohemian Romantic composer, and one of the leading conductors of his generation. He composed much of his music (including this

song) in a hut by a lake in the countryside, and his love of the natural world pervades his music. Listen for the nightingale in the flute and the cuckoo in the clarinet.

41:52 European Goldfinch

The European goldfinch is native to Europe, North Africa and western and central Asia. Breeding males have a red face with black markings around the eyes and broad yellow bars on their black wings. The song is a pleasant tinkling medley of trills and twitters, but always including the tri-syllabic call phrase or a *teLLIT-teLLIT-teLLIT*.

42:18 American Goldfinch

Goldfinches are usually easy to find, and are most abundant in areas with thistle plants, or near feeders. Their *po-ta-to-chip* flight call draws attention to them in open country. Males sing a long and variable series of twitters and warbles that can be several seconds long. The notes and phrases are variable and repeated in a seemingly random order. Birds continue to learn song patterns throughout life.

42:27 Concerto for Flute in D “The Goldfinch”, by Vivaldi

Antonio Lucio Vivaldi (1678 – 1741) was an Italian Baroque composer, virtuoso violinist, teacher, impresario, and Roman Catholic priest. Like most of his concerti, the “Goldfinch” was written for the orphaned girls who were his students at the Ospedale della Pietá in Venice. Listen for how Vivaldi imitates the finch’s energetic song in his flute writing, while also painting a picture of the fluttering flock in the strings.

45:15 Eastern Meadowlark

The sweet, lazy whistles of Eastern Meadowlarks waft over summer grasslands and farms in eastern North America. The birds themselves sing from fence posts and telephone lines or stalk through the grasses, probing the ground for insects with their long, sharp bills. An Eastern Meadowlark male can sing several different variations of its song. In New York, the songs from one male were analyzed using spectrograms; the bird sang more than 100 different patterns of song.

45:37 The Daisies, by Samuel Barber

Samuel Barber (1910-1981) was a pianist, conductor, baritone, music educator, and one of the most celebrated composers of the 20th century. Listen for the lark singing up from the piano in this short and sweet song.

The Daisies

by James Stephens

*In the scented bud of the morning O,
When the windy grass went rippling far!*

*I saw my dear one walking slow
In the field where the daises are.*

*We did not laugh, and we did not speak,
As we wandered happ'ly, to and fro,
I kissed my dear on either cheek,
In the bud of the morning O!*

*A lark sang up, from the breezy land;
A lark sang down, from a cloud afar;
As she and I went, hand in hand,
In the field where the daisies are.*

46:25 Horned Lark

Horned Larks are widespread songbirds of fields, deserts, and tundra, where they forage for seeds and insects, and sing a high, tinkling song, often given in flight display over suitable open habitats.

46:36 Eurasian Skylark

The Eurasian Skylark is known for the song of the male, which is delivered in hovering flight from heights of 50 to 100 meters, when the singing bird may appear as just a dot in the sky from the ground. The long, unbroken song is a clear, bubbling warble delivered high in the air while the bird is rising, circling or hovering. The song generally lasts two to three minutes, but it tends to last longer later in the mating season, when songs can last continuously for 20 minutes or more.

46:50 Excerpt from “The Lark Ascending” by George Meredith

*He rises and begins to round,
He drops the silver chain of sound,
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake.*

*For singing till his heaven fills,
'Tis love of earth that he instils,
And ever winging up and up,
Our valley is his golden cup
And he the wine which overflows
to lift us with him as he goes.*

*Till lost on his aerial rings
In light, and then the fancy sings.*

47:28 *The Lark Ascending*, by R. Vaughn Williams

The Lark Ascending is a short, single-movement work by the English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 – 1958), inspired by the poem of the same name by the English writer George Meredith. The composer's wife, Ursula, wrote that in *The Lark Ascending* Vaughan Williams had "taken a literary idea on which to build his musical thought ... and had made the violin become both the bird's song and its flight, being, rather than illustrating the poem from which the title was taken".

54:51 “Never Again Would Birds’ Song Be The Same”, by Robert Frost

*He would declare and could himself believe
That the birds there in all the garden round
From having heard the daylong voice of Eve
Had added to their own an oversound,
Her tone of meaning but without the words.
Admittedly an eloquence so soft
Could only have had an influence on birds
When call or laughter carried it aloft.
Be that as may be, she was in their song.
Moreover her voice upon their voices crossed
Had now persisted in the woods so long
That probably it never would be lost.
Never again would birds’ song be the same.
And to do that to birds was why she came.*

55:52 *Skylark*, by Hoagy Carmichael

"Skylark" is an American popular song with lyrics by Johnny Mercer and music by Hoagy Carmichael, published in 1941.

57:15 *Common Loon*

The eerie calls of Common Loons echo across clear lakes of the northern wilderness and are emblematic of summer in the woods.

Credits

00:00 Common Cuckoo

A Sound Guide to the Birds of Paris; Frémeaux & Associés

0:11 “Summer is a comin’ in”

Read by Massimo Descano.

0:53 *Sumer Is Icumen In*, Anonymous

Música de Tres Culturas, In Taberna; Mundovivo MVd 351

2:05 Yellow-billed cuckoo

Bird Songs of Canada, Vol. 2, John Neville; Neville Recording

2:17 Black-billed cuckoo

USA & Canada, A Selection of Common Bird Songs; Frémeaux & Associés

3:40 “Awake you slumbering hearts”

Read by Jazimina MacNeil.

4:18 European Starling

A Sound Guide to the Birds of Paris; Frémeaux & Associés

4:41 American Robin

Birds, Sound Effect Library; Hot Ideas Inc.

4:57 Common Nightingale

Dawn Chorus, John Neville; Neville Recording

5:57 *Réveillez vous cueurs endormis*, by Clément Janequin

Touched, Calmus Ensemble; Carus Verlag, Carus 83.379

11:28 Common Blackbird

A Sound Guide to the Birds of Paris; Frémeaux & Associés.

12:00 *Blackbird*, by The Beatles

The Beatles (The White Album), John Lennon & Paul McCartney; Apple Records

14:46 Hermit Thrush

USA & Canada, A Selection of Common Bird Songs; Frémeaux & Associés

16:03 Hermit Thrush At Eve, by Amy Beach

Recorded by pianist Mimi Stillman for Electric Earth Concerts.

21:05 Wood Thrush

USA & Canada, A Selection of Common Bird Songs; Frémeaux & Associés

21:16 “Wood Thrush” by Arthur A. Allen

Read by Marji Gere.

Cornell Rural School Leaflet, May 1909, Vol.2, No.9

22:54 La Grive des bois, by Olivier Messiaen

Messiaen: Des Canyons Aux Etoiles, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival & Alan Gilbert; eOne

27:44 White-throated Sparrow

USA & Canada, A Selection of Common Bird Songs; Frémeaux & Associés

28:11 Scene by the Brook, from Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony

Ultimate Beethoven: The Essential Masterpieces, Concertgebouworkest & Bernard Haitink; Decca

30:34 Song Sparrow

USA & Canada, A Selection of Common Bird Songs; Frémeaux & Associés

32:00 Common Yellowthroat

USA & Canada, A Selection of Common Bird Songs; Frémeaux & Associés

32:53 Louisiana Waterthrush

Bird Song Ear Training Guide, John Feith; Caculo

35:06 Common Quail

Songbirds: Field & Meadow, Echoes of Nature

36:26 Northern Mockingbird

USA & Canada, A Selection of Common Bird Songs; Frémeaux & Associés

36:39 “The Gift” by Mary Oliver

Read by Jon Creamer.

37:57 “In Praise of Great Intellect”

Read by Susie Salinas.

39:27 *Lob des Hohen Verstandes*, by G. Mahler

Mahler: Des Knaben Wunderhorn, Barbara Bonney, Riccardo Chailly & Concertgebouworkest; Decca

41:52 European Goldfinch

A Sound Guide to the Birds of Paris; Frémeaux & Associés

42:18 American Goldfinch

Popular Bird Calls & Songs, Wildtones

42:27 *Concerto for Flute in D “The Goldfinch”*, by Vivaldi

Vivaldi: Flute Concertos, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Emmanuel Pahud & Richard Tognetti; Warner Classics

45:15 Eastern Meadowlark

USA & Canada, A Selection of Common Bird Songs; Frémeaux & Associés

45:37 *The Daisies*, by Samuel Barber

Leontyne Price - Carnegie Hall Recital Debut, Leontyne Price & David Garvey; RCA Red Seal

46:25 Horned Lark

Bird Songs of the North American Prairie, John Neville; Neville Recordings

46:36 Eurasian Skylark

Songbirds: Field & Meadow, Echoes of Nature

46:50 Excerpt from “The Lark Ascending” by George Meredith

Read by Henry Walters.

47:28 *The Lark Ascending*, by R. Vaughn Williams

Elgar: Violin Concerto – Vaughan Williams: The Lark Ascending, Hilary Hahn, London Symphony Orchestra & Sir Colin Davis; Deutsche Grammophon

54:51 “Never Again Would Birds’ Song Be The Same”, by Robert Frost

Read by Jazimina MacNeil.

55:52 *Skylark*, by Johnny Mercer & Hoagy Carmichael

Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Johnny Mercer Song Book, Ella Fitzgerald & Nelson Riddle;
Verve.

57:15 Common Loon

Bird Songs of the Great Lakes, John Neville; Neville Recordings.

Bibliography:

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Mozart’s Starling by Lyanda Lynn Haupt; Little, Brown Spark; 1st edition (April 4, 2017)

Overtone-based pitch selection in hermit thrush song: Unexpected convergence with scale construction in human music by Emily L. Doolittle, Bruno Gingras, Dominik M. Endres, and W. Tecumseh Fitch; Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences Nov 2014

In Fine Feather audio track and text compiled by Jazimina MacNeil.

Map artwork and design by Noah MacNeil.

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