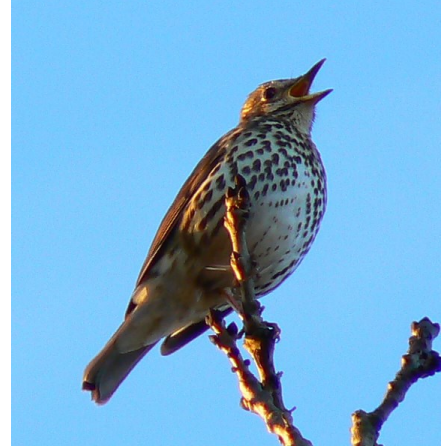


THE GARDEN'S SOUND OF MUSIC

Midsummer As the longest day, or even, the shortest night passes, we find ourselves barely experiencing any darkness—and even if you do burn the midnight oil, the darkness amounts to a cloudy grey. In extreme contrast to Midwinter, this is a relieving and kind time for our bodies.

Song Our mind and senses savour not only the sights and scents that gardens and nature provide, but sounds that are amplified to a raucous level. And I'm not referring to outdoor BBQs and their accompanying sound track, nor the frantic purring of tractors as farmers hurry to make hay. I'm talking birdsong.



File:Song thrush near Faringdon Folly - geograph.org.uk - 682555.jpg
by Brian Robert Marshall is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

Tune in Although the twittering and chirping can be heard all day long, the best time to tune in is early mornings, as there is less background noise, the air is usually stiller, and sound carries almost 20 times further than any other time of day.

The very best time to hear crystal clear tweeting is half an hour either side of sunrise, hence the phrase 'the dawn chorus'. Yes, that's a pretty early start for most folks, but it is worth it. Set the alarm 30 minutes before sunrise, make a cup of tea, open the window—or even better, head outdoors, and just listen. The playlist usually starts off with the blackbirds, robins and thrushes, soon being joined by other choristers until the crescendo when all the birds in the area are performing together.

Bird song is usually male dominated, showcasing their strength of song and character, but also alerting others of their territorial boundaries. And early morning is the best time to be blasting out their boyish beats as it's still too dull to be chasing down breakfast, and still too dark to be hunted themselves.

Mood Boosting And while singing is positive behaviour for the garden birds, scientists say that birdsong and other sounds of nature are positives for us too—listening in can reduce stress, restore attention and boost mood.

Still needing inspiration for getting into this garden gig? The RSPB have a fabulous website on all things birds, and have especially good information on bird song including sound clips and tips on identification.

So! Set that alarm for an earlier morning rise, open your ears to the dawn chorus, and feel the benefits yourself.

Visit: <https://rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/sounds-of-spring/sounds-of-parks-and-gardens>