

## **Birdsong Workshop 17<sup>th</sup> February**

### **Report by Sue Overton**

Many thanks to Andrew Lapworth for leading this very popular workshop which was attended by thirty members all keen to improve their skills in recognising the songs of our feathered friends.

Andrew's superb presentation of recorded birdsong and accompanying slides answered many questions – why do birds sing, how and when do they sing, where do they sing – along with helpful tips/mnemonics as an aid to memorising the different songs e.g. the Great Tit sounds like 'Teacher! Teacher!' and the Wood Pigeon seems to say 'Take two shoes Taffy!'

The anatomy of birds includes a syrinx (Greek for pan pipes) with two voice boxes rather than our larynx/one voice box and this enables them to produce two sounds simultaneously.

Birds might sing to attract a mate, to declare their ownership of territory or as an alarm when predators are near. Our towns and gardens provide a suitable habitat for many of our well known birds such as robins who have different songs for the different times of year, blackbirds whose alarm call differs depending on what the threat is, blue tits who have a variety of high, thin calls and the wren, smallest and loudest.

Woods such as Deepdale are the chosen habitat for the warblers, bullfinch, marsh tit, nuthatch, redstart, pied flycatcher and the great spotted woodpecker with its distinctive call – 'tck,tck'. The blackcaps with their warbling song arrive with the spring equinox and the cuckoos can be heard from May – the female cuckoo has a 'bubbling' song.

Birds preferring the watery habitat of becks and the river Tees include dippers, kingfishers, oystercatchers, skylarks, lapwings, redshanks, snipe, nightjars and grouse both red and black.

To hone your listening skills, you can download apps such as Merlin: bird ID help for 8500+ species.

Or got to the website: [www.xeno-canto.org](http://www.xeno-canto.org) which shares wildlife sounds from all over the world.

Or listen to 'Tweet of the day: a year of Britain's birds from the Radio 4 series.