

Lost Language Survey

Please share your “lost language” with us so we can represent it in our object records.

About the project:

*Lost Language of Nature* will bring stories of animals and nature from around the world to Saffron Walden Museum. A year-long project to begin to recognise and discuss the global origins of the museum’s taxidermy items and to respect, share and record their international stories through community work and exhibitions.

The focus of our community work is to collect both local and international stories and cultural information about our taxidermy specimens from the public – THAT’S YOU!

How to use this form

This booklet is a list of the birds we hope to conserve during the project. We have also listed some of the names and stories we have found during our own research.

Take a look at the list and if you have any words or stories to share about any of the birds, please complete the form on page 9 and tell us all about it.

Finally, please sign the consent form on the back page and hand in at the front desk to put in **Charlotte’s or James’ in-tray.**

Why we need community input:

The information that we currently hold on our specimens is purely scientific, which means it is simply the scientific name, the English common name and possibly the sex and where the bird was collected.

We don’t have any information on how these animals have informed and influence/d the culture of the peoples where the birds live.

We want to collect this really important information too, use it to update our records, and inform future displays and exhibitions in the Museum and in the community, starting with *The Lost Language of Nature* exhibition opening at the museum in July.

List of birds

This is the list of birds which we would like to discover the lost language for – we have also included some words or stories that we have already found during research. If you have heard any of these words or stories used, please let us know, along with any of your own, using the form on the next page.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **British common name** | **Where found** | **Folk/local names and stories we have already found** |
| Arctic tern | Coasts of Arctic Ocean and Southern Ocean. | Sea Swallow |
| Black-winged stilts | Northern Europe and Asia | Stilt plover, long-legged plover |
| Eider duck | Coastal northern Europe, northeast Asia and North America | Cuddy’s duck, St Cuthbert’s duck |
| Greylag Goose | Europe and Asia; Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, China. | Graylag goose.  Grey lag-goose, because it lagged behind other migrating geese. |
| White-fronted goose | North Europe and Asia; South and west Europe | Specklebelly, in North America |
| Rough-legged buzzard | North America, Europe and Russia | Rough legged hawk  First Nations American peoples see this buzzard as unclean or a bad omen, or a liar and bully in legends. |
| Little bittern. | Africa and Madagascar, southern Europe, southern Asia | Little heron, little brown bittern |
| Squacco heron | Southern Europe, West Asia, Africa |  |
| Common kestrel (Eurasian kestrel) | Europe, Asia, Africa | Blood hawk, coistrel, stonegall, staniel |
| Black-crowned night heron. | India, Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, North and South America. | Blacked-capped heron or just night Heron.  Japanese legend of blue heron fire. Aosaginohi or Aosagibi. An old black-crowned night heron transformed into a yokai (monster or spirit). Feathers fuse into scales that glow blue. Its breath releases a golden powder that collects to form a blue light that eventually dissipates |
| Little egret | Southern Europe, West Asia, Africa, South Asia. | Batty bird |
| Sparrowhawk | Europe Asia, north Africa | Eurasian sparrow hawk, northern sparrow hawk, sparrow hawk.  Spar-hawk or Spur-hawk, blue hawk, blue merlin.  Sparrowhawks and cuckoos were thought to be the same bird with different seasonal plumage – sparrowhawk in winter and cuckoo in summer. |
| Cape longclaw. | Zimbabwe and South Africa | Orange-throated longclaw |
| Kookaburra. | Australia, introduced New Zealand | Kookaburra is a loaned word from Wiradjuri – “guuguubarra” which sounds like its call.  “Kookaburra sits in the old gum tree” song |
| Bittern (Eurasian bittern, common bittern) | Parts of Europe, across Asia, northern, central and southern Africa | Bog blutter, boom bird, mire drumble, mire drum, bog trotter, bull of the bog, barrel maker.  People believed it used a reed as a trumpet or put its head in water or mud to produce a loud sound.  May have inspired the mythological Slavic creature the ‘drekavac’ |
| Golden eagle | Europe, Asia, North America, northern Africa | Associated with courage and honour in North American First Nations traditions. |
| Bustard | Central Asia, west Asia, east Asia, parts of Europe |  |
| Crane (Common crane, Eurasian crane) | Northern Europe and Asia. Southern Europe, northern Africa, south and east Asia | Highly symbolic birds in many cultures with records dating back to ancient times. |
| Grey-hooded Attila | Southeast Brazil |  |
| Striped manakin | Coastal Brazil, and north and west Amazonia | Now recognised as two different species, one in each area. |
| Lesser florican | India | Also called the likh or kharmore |
| Fulmar (northern fulmar) | North Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and coasts | Contain the souls of drowned sailors. |
| Red-breasted toucan | Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina. | Aztecs believed Toucan to be a messenger of the gods, with a beak made from rainbows. They would perform rituals to the toucan for the gods to grant them rain. |
| African black-headed oriole | Sub-Saharan Africa |  |
| White-breasted (white-throated) kingfisher | Eurasia: Bulgaria to Philippines | State bird of West Bengal  Scientific name *Halcyon* comes from an Ancient Greek myth. The woman Alcyone (Halcyon) drowned herself after her husband Ceyx’s ship was sunk by Zeus. The gods took pity and transformed them both into kingfishers. |
| Lesser golden-backed woodpecker | From Pakistan to Sri Lanka |  |
| Red-headed motmot | South America | Rufous-capped motmot, russet-crowned motmot |
| Indian paradise flycatcher | May be Himalayan subspecies on account of mainly white plumage. | Flycatchers were given their beautiful crest and long tail feathers after they fanned and cooled Lord Vishnu following his victory in battle over the demon Hirayakasipu. |
| Green-throated mango. | South and Central America | On Trinidad, hummingbirds are said to hold the spirits of ancestors. |
| Crimson-breasted barbet | Indian subcontinent and SE Asia | Also called ‘coppersmith barbet’ because its call sounds like the rhythmic hammer strikes when beating copper. |
| Little bee-eater | Sub-Saharan Africa | Ancient Egyptians believed they had medicinal properties. |
| Chestnut-bellied rock thrush. | From Pakistan to Vietnam |  |
| European dipper | Europe, Middle East, Central Asia Indian Subcontinent | Water Ouzel.  In Norway, dippers could plot revenge with dairy folk against people who disturbed their nests or chicks.  Gerald of Wales believed they were a type of kingfisher |
| Nightingale | Europe and northern Africa to Central Asia | No nightingales in Havering-at-Bower in Essex, because their song interrupted Edward the Confessor while praying, so he prayed that their song would never be heard again. |
| Blackbird | Europe,  Western Asia and north Africa. Introduced to southeast Australia, New Zealand. | Black bride; black osel/ousle/ouzel Singing shrill or lots in the morning forecasts rain |
| Woodchat shrike | Southern Europe, northern and Saharan Africa, West Asia. | Wierangel or Wierangle, meaning ‘suffocating angel’.  Worrier, in Yorkshire. |
| Giant antshrike | South America | Mbatara guasu, Batará gigante, Matracão, borralhara |
| Waxwing (Bohemian waxwing) | Northern Europe, Asia, western North America | Their bright red feather-tips look like the wax that was used to seal letters. |
| Spotted flycatcher | Europe, Asia, Africa except northern Africa |  |
| Eurasian Nuthatch | Europe and Asia to Japan | Name may have come from habit of pecking at nuts hidden in cracks in bark when feeding over winter |
| Richard’s pipit | Northern Asia, Indian subcontinent, South-east Asia |  |
| European Herring gull | Europe up to Arctic, Scandinavia, Iceland | Seagulls are the souls of drowned sailors and fishermen so should not be killed. But it is good luck to see them. |
| Glaucous gull | North Atlantic and North Pacific coasts, Canada, northern Europe | Burgomaster gull, Grisard |
| Great potoo | South America | The potoo holds the spirit of a woman whose husband turned into the moon, and she into a bird. Now she cries at night for her lost love. |
| Eurasian Buzzard | Europe and Asia, to South Africa. | Common Buzzard  European tale: The buzzard didn’t dig its own well to wash in after Creation, but claimed it had dug the crow’s well. God cursed the lying buzzard so it can only drink from rainwater and dew. |
| Gyrfalcon | Arctic coasts, North America, Siberia | Ger falcon, Jer falcon. Male is called jerkin.  ‘Gyr’ meaning ‘ravenous’ or ‘vulture’ |
| Montagu’s harriers | Europe and Asia. Africa and India in the northern hemisphere winter |  |
| Eurasian hobby | Europe, Africa, Asia | Hobby is female, male is ‘jack’ or ‘robin’  Hobby was used to keep skylarks on the ground while they were covered in nets in the ‘daring of larks’. |
| Short-eared owl | Europe, North America, South America, Asia. | Called ‘pueo’ in Hawaii. It is a protector and is sacred and saves or revives heroes in stories. The owl flying across someone’s path is a warning to stop the journey. |
| Moorhen (common moorhen) | Europe, Africa, west and central Asia, south and southeast Asia | Marsh hen, water hen, mire hen  May have brought fire to humans in Hawaiian myths, and scorched its forehead red. |
| Guillemot (common guillemot) | North Atlantic and North Pacific Oceans and coasts. | Murre, common murre. |
| Peregrine | Everywhere between tundra and tropics, except tropical rainforest and New Zealand | Black-backed flacon, perry hawk, cliff hawk |
| Smew duck | Northern and Eastern Europe, Russia, East Asia |  |
| Avocet (pied avocet) | Africa, Europe, across Asia and south Asia |  |
| Cotton teal | Central Africa, west, south and southeast Asia, Australia |  |
| Long-tailed widowbird | Southern Africa, Kenya to South Africa & Lesotho |  |
| Wood duck | North America |  |
| Peter’s finfoot | Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Mozambique, South Africa |  |
| White-tailed eagle | Europe and Asia | Shetland fishermen believed that as soon as sea eagle appeared, fish would rise to the surface belly up.  Celtic mythology states the eagle is the second-oldest and -wisest animal, after the salmon. |
| Eurasian spoonbill | Europe and Asia, north Africa. Britain when warmer. | Popeler, Shovelar(d) or Liver. ‘Spoonbill’ was transferred to this bird from the duck we now call the ‘shoveler’.  Ancient Greeks believed it drew blood from its breast using its beak to bring dead chicks back to life, a belief later attached to the pelican. |
| Storm petrel | North Atlantic, western Mediterranean | Sailors believe it causes or predicts bad weather. Associated with Mother Carey, a cruel and threatening witch who brings storms with her. |
| Red kite | Europe, northwest Africa | Shite hawk, used by British Army black kite in India and Egypt, wrongly used for red kites.  Old Kashubian Polish ritual of ‘beheading the kite’ for its supposed evil deeds and laziness, used to warn people against the same things. |
| Scaup (Greater scaup) | North and Central America, Europe, East Asia. | Bluebill in North America  Scaup and other small ducks: Half-duck. A wildfowl hunter’s name for smaller ducks, because they were worth less money. |
| African paradise flycatcher | Sub-Saharan Africa, and Arabian peninsula | Often killed by Masaai boys during rites of passage and the skins used to decorate headdresses. |
| Woodlark | Europe, Middle East, North Africa | Featured in poems by George Manley Hopkins and Robert Burns, although Burns’ may have been about the tree pipit, called ‘woodlark’ in Scotland. |
| European Stonechat | Europe, north Africa |  |
| Eurasian skylark | Europe, Asia, North African mountains | As the first bird to sing in the morning, it disturbs people’s sleep and causes lovers to part.  In France, it is a gossip and isn’t trusted to keep secrets. It also carries bad news. |
| Crossbill (Common or red crossbill) | Europe and Asia | Medieval northern European belief that it bent its beak trying to remove the nails from Jesus’ cross, and it is red because of hid blood. |
| Nightjar | Migrates between Europe/Asia and Africa | Goat-sucker, lich fowl, gabble ratchet, corpse hound.  A common belief was that they suckled milk from goats, leaving none for the kids or even making the nanny goats blind.  The souls of unbaptised children were doomed to fly as nightjars until Judgement Day. |
| Common nighthawk | North, central and South America, the Caribbean | Bull-bat, bugeater.  Nebraska was once called the Bugeater State. |
| Common swift | Migrates between Europe/Asia and southern Africa | Devil’s bird – its call sounds like souls going to hell  Scientifc name *Apus* comes from the belief that they had no feet  They were thought to hibernate in mud or under ponds before migration was understood in Europe. |
| Alpine swift | Southern Europe to Himalayas, central and southern Africa | In parts of Africa, birds that migrate are the bringers of life and the mothers of trees, which support the world. Strange trees from far away grow below their roosting places, from the seeds in their droppings. |
| Swallow (barn swallow) | North and South America, Europe, Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Australia | Thought to hibernate in caves, trees or mud, not migrate. Or even fly to the moon.  They can carry bad luck or freckles away. |
| Rock dove | Worldwide. Originally only southern Europe and North Africa to India | Tales of seven pigeons or doves feature in Spanish, Portuguese and Italian fairytales |
| Zebra dove | Thailand, Myanmar, Indonesia. Introduced around Indian and Pacific Oceans. | Popular pets in Indonesia and Thailand, competitions held to find the best singer.  Stories involving Prince Joko Mangu from the Sunda Kingdom of Java, and a person being transformed into a zebra dove. |
| Hoopoe (Eurasian hoopoe) | Europe and Asia, parts of Africa | A stone from a hoopoe can force a sleeping person to tell all the bad they have done  Ancient Greeks believed it was able to magically open locks or remove stuck objects  Estonian belief that its song predicts the death of many people or cattle |
| Hen harrier | Central and Eastern Europe.  Also migrates between northern Eurasia and southern Europe. | In parts of Europe, a hen harrier perched on a house was a sign that three people would die |

Your stories, myths, legends and words

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| --- | --- |
| Name of bird as shown in list on previous page |  |

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| Colloquial, folk, family names you have heard of or have called this bird by yourself  e.g. In my family we call partridges “Alans” due to Alan Partridge. |  |

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| --- | --- |
| Any stories, myths, legends, cultural significance of the bird |  |

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| Have you heard any of the names, myths, legends, or stories shown on the table on the previous page? If so, which? |  |

Lost Language of Nature Project: Consent form

Historic collections material (documents, objects, samples, photographs) and oral history recordings are integral to our intention to preserve the history of Saffron Walden and the Uttlesford district as a whole.

Your image, recorded interview and any other material collected from you as part of this project will become part of the museum’s accessioned collection, where it will be preserved as a permanent public reference resource for use in research, publication, education, lectures and, where relevant, online.

The purpose of this Agreement is to ensure that your contribution is added to the collections of Saffron Walden Museum in strict accordance with your wishes.

This Agreement is made between Saffron Walden Museum (“the Museum”) and you (“the project participant”) and your parent or guardian if you are under 18 years old:

Your name:…….………………………………………..…………………………………………………

Your address:……………………………………………………..……………………………………….

in regard to the material collected on:

Date(s):……………………………………………………..

Declaration: I, the Project Participant and my parent or guardian if under the age of 18, confirm that I have consented to take part in the collection of material and recording of my memories and hereby assign to the Museum all copyright in my contribution for use in all and any media for the purposes of this project and the collection of historical data. I understand that this will not affect my moral right to be identified as the ‘performer’ in accordance with the Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988.

If you do not wish to assign your copyright to the Museum, or you wish to limit public access to your contribution, please state these conditions here:

………………………………………………..…………………………………………………

This Agreement will be governed by and construed in accordance with English law and the jurisdiction of the English courts.

Both parties shall, by signing below, indicate acceptance of the Agreement.

By or on behalf of the Project Participant:

Signed project participant: ............................................................................................................................

Name in block capitals: .....................................................................

Date: ………………

Signed parent or guardian (if under 18) : …………………………………………………………………………………………………….

Name in block capitals: .....................................................................

Date: ………………

On behalf of Saffron Walden Museum:

Signed: ...........................................................................................................................

Name in block capitals: .....................................................................

Date: ….……………