



# Songs & Ballads



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This ballad of "Old Daddy Fox" was inspired by [Mike Seeger's](#) classic rendition of J.D. Dillingham's "Old Mother Hippletoe."



## "Old Daddy Fox"

Monday, March 3, 2008

*"Daddy Fox stepped out on the town one night  
And he prayed to the moon to afford him light,  
He had many of a mile to go that night,  
Before he reached that town-y-o."*

Mike Seeger recorded "Old Mother Hippletoe" for the collection of [Animal Folksongs For Children](#), which he did with his sisters, Peggy, Barbara and Penny Seeger and all their children. These songs come from their mother, [Ruth Crawford Seeger's](#) songbook also called **Animal Folk Songs for Children**.

J.D. Dillingham's version of this old ballad about the fox, which is the one in Ruth Seeger's book, was taken from

Vance Randolph's [Ozark Folksongs](#), Vol. I, pp. 386-90. Go [HERE](#) to find Dillingham's version of this song. You will have to scroll down a ways to find it. This source says the following:

**Old Mother Hippletoe**

J. D. Dillingham, vocal. Recorded January, 1937, in Llana, Tex., by John A. Lomax. Library of Congress Archive of American Folk Song AFS 898 A2.

And it goes on to say:

The fox of the Raynard cycle of stories (like that of Aesop's fables and the Br'er Rabbit cycles) was an allegorical animal with human traits who acted diversely as a braggart, trickster, buffoon, good guy, and bad guy. The fox in "Old Mother Hippletoe" (generally titled "The Fox"), however, is characterized by his simple eagerness to eat farm animals and his swiftness in retreating ahead of the farmer.

Early in the eighteenth century, "The Fox," portraying the farmers' fight against a predator of domestic animals, was sung at all harvest suppers in the West of England. By the mid-nineteenth century, "The Fox" was considered a children's song and was printed in a collection of nursery rhymes. In *The Ballad Book* (New York: Barnes, 1955, p. 749), MacEdward Leach noted that, in America, "As early as the latter part of the 18th century it had become a nursery ballad, and in the 19th century it was appropriated by the Negroes to become one of their favorite songs."

This is a very old song. The earliest mention is "Bold Raynard the Fox," in Gammer Gurton's Garland (1783). [HERE](#) and [HERE](#) are two other old versions. And here is the complete discussion from the [Mudcat](#) Cafe, where there are many different versions listed.

And [HERE](#) is a PDF version of a children's book that tells the whole story of the fox.

This ballad is not included in F.J. Child's collection of the **English and Scottish Popular Ballads**. It should have been, but Child seemed shy about including ballads about animals or birds.

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