



# Songs & Ballads



SONGS & BALLADS



This is a real ballad because it's got at least thirty-three verses and it's based on real events. For some reason you won't find it in Child's collection.

## "The Ballad of the Birds"

Friday, March 7, 2008

*"Here I sit with my coffee in my hand,  
Lookin' out the window at the lay of the land,  
All my little friends have come to feed,  
Peckin' up peanuts and sunflower seeds."*

One of the older songs we have is called "The Woody Choristers" from the late 1600's or early 1700's. Click [HERE](#) to see the text. This became the basis of a very popular and widespread song called "[The Birds' Courting Song](#)". It is more commonly known today as "The Little Leatherwinged Bat". I first heard this sung by Burl Ives.



Hermit Thrush



Chickadee

This song has been recorded many times in [many different versions](#). Click [HERE](#) for a brief cut from Pete Seeger's version ("play sample"). One of the nicer versions is that of Pete's sister, Peggy - click [HERE](#). And [HERE](#) is a set of lyrics with a midi tune from Vermont. Cecil Sharp collected a version from [Jane Gentry](#) of Hot Springs, North Carolina, [HERE](#).



Red-bellied  
Woodpecker

The tune I use for my version of this ballad comes from the singing of Nimrod Workman. Click [HERE](#) for another song by him and some previous discussion. On his album "[Passing Through The Garden](#)", he sings a song called "Old Owl", which comes from the same family as the "Leatherwing Bat". Click [HERE](#) to hear an Nimrod give an introduction to this song and sing part of the first verse.



Titmouse

George Foss collected a somewhat similar version from Marybird McAllister of Brown's Cove, Virginia in 1957. The verses are like those of Nimrod's version, but the tune is more like that of Jane Gentry's above. Two unusual verses are:



Willard &  
Bill

"Oh", says the robin as he run,  
"Wished I had a bottle of rum  
And a pretty little girl a' sittin' on my knee  
Lord, how happy I would be."

Says the little humming bird,  
"I would go if I wasn't so small.  
I am so small I can't get a wife  
'Mongst these flowers I'll spend my life".

(from **Southern Mountain Folksongs**, by W.K. McNeil, p. 72-73).

My version of this ballad is based on observations of bird behavior in my own neck of the woods. It accounts for almost all of the birds I have seen so far in my backyard.



**Anonymous**

**Sharp-shinned  
Hawk**

I love this one! We're certainly not alone in these woods, are we? What great partners they are for us, singing for their suppers. Thanks for keeping a list and keeping a musical record. Nice voice! love, Povi

**Friday, March 7, 2008 - 04:22 PM**

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