

## *Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh* le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

*A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, written and compiled by Roddy Maclean, and specifically aimed at Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Roddy can be contacted by e-mail at [roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk) \**

Bidh sibh eòlach air an t-seanfhalach ann am Beurla, ‘*the early bird catches the worm.*’ Uill, seo fear ann an Gàidhlig a tha car coltach ris, ged a tha e ’s dòcha beagan nas an-ìochdmhoire: ‘*Am fitheach a dh’èireas moch, ’s ann leis a bhios sùil a’ bheathaich a tha sa pholl.*’ Am fitheach a dh’èireas moch, ’s ann leis a bhios sùil a’ bheathaich a tha sa pholl.

Seadh, uill, tuigidh sibh gu bheil fithich gu math dèidheil air sùilean bheathaichean. Gu dearbh, tha seanfhalach eile ann mu dheidhinn sin: *Cha toir am fitheach an t-sùil dha isean fhèin.* Tha e cho dèidheil air an t-sùil is gun cum e dha fhèin i eadhon ma tha isean acrach anns an nead. Cha toir am fitheach an t-sùil dha isean fhèin.

Bidh fios agaibh, tha mi cinnteach, gur e a’ Bheurla a th’ air fitheach – *raven*. Tha an t-eun sin gu math ainmeil air feadh na Gaidhealtachd is, gu dearbh, tha e a’ nochdadh ann am mòran ainmean-àite, leithid Creag an Fhithich agus Creag nam Fitheach. Is bidh fios agaibh gum buin an t-eun seo do na feannagan – eòin mhòra dhubha. Ach an urrainn dhuibh na diofar fheannagan aithneachadh o chèile – ann an dreach agus ann an cainnt? Uill, seo iad – gu h-aithghearr co-dhiù.

A’ chiad tè – sin a’ *chathag dhearg-chasach*. ’S e feannag bheag a th’ innte, le casan dearga agus gob dearg, agus chan eil i ri faicinn ann am mòran àiteachan ann an Alba an là an-diugh. Chunnaic mise feadhainn ann an Colasa agus Orasa. ’S e *chough no chough* a th’ air ann am Beurla. A’ *chathag dhearg-chasach*.

’S e eun eadar-dhealaichte a th’ anns a’ *chathaig fhèin* – an *jackdaw* mar a theirear rithe ann am Beurla. Tha i dubh ach a-mhàin air cùl a cinn agus air cùl a h-amhaich. Tha an *ròcas càirdeach* dhi is tha ise gu tur dubh ach a-mhàin gu bheil i bàn timcheall a guib. Ann an Athall, chanadh na seann daoine ‘garrag’ ris an ròcas agus bha abairt aca – ‘cho Gaidhealach ris na garragan’.

’S e *feannag* a chanas sinn ris an eun dubh ris an canar *carrion crow* ann am Beurla agus canaidh sinn *feannag ghlas* ris an fheadhainn a tha glas agus dubh – na *hoodies* mar a theirear riutha ann am Beurla. Canaidh cuid *starrag* ris an eun seo. Agus aig deireadh na liosta tha am fitheach.

Sin iad ma tha – na feannagan: a’ *chathag*, a’ *chathag dhearg-chasach*, an *ròcas*, an *fheannag*, an *fheannag ghlas* agus am fitheach. Agus a-nise bu mhath leam rann bheag innse dhuibh air a bheil ‘Conaltradh nan Eun’ anns a bheil cuid de na feannagan a’ nochdadh. Tha am facal *garrach* a’ ciallachadh isean feannaig. Seo an rann agus saoilidh mi gum biodh e glè fhreagarrach do chloinn:

‘Fàg, fàg,’ ars’ an fheannag,  
‘Is e mo mhac-s’ an garrach donn.’  
‘Gòrach, gòrach,’ ars’ an ròcas,  
‘Is e mo mhac-s’ an garrach gorm.’  
‘Gròc, gròc,’ ars’ am fitheach,

'Is e mo mhac-s' a chriomas uain.'  
'Glidheag, glidheag,' ars' an fhaoileag,  
'Is e mo mhac-s' an t-isean soirbh.'  
'Gliog, gliog,' ars' an iolair',  
'Is e mo mhac-s' an tighearna oirbh.'

Seo i a-rithist agus cuiridh mi na fuaimean ann gu ceart an turas seo.

'Fàg, fàg,' ars' an fheannag,  
'Is e mo mhac-s' an garrach donn.'  
'Gòrach, gòrach,' ars' an ròcas,  
'Is e mo mhac-s' an garrach gorm.'  
'Gròc, gròc,' ars' am fitheach,  
'Is e mo mhac-s' a chriomas uain.'  
'Glidheag, glidheag,' ars' an fhaoileag,  
'Is e mo mhac-s' an t-isean soirbh.'  
'Gliog, gliog,' ars' an iolair',  
'Is e mo mhac-s' an tighearna oirbh.'

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**Faclan na seachdaine:** Creag an Fhithich: *Rock of the Raven*; Creag nam Fitheach: *Rock of the Ravens*; Athall: *Atholl*; soirbh: *placid, easy-going*.

**Abairtean na seachdaine:** eadhon ma tha isean acrach anns an nead: *even if there is a hungry chick in the nest*; gum buin an t-eun seo do na feannagan: *that this bird belongs to the crows*; ann an dreach agus ann an cainnt: *in appearance and in speech*; ann an Colasa is Orasa: *in Colonsay and Oronsay*; ach a-mhàin air cùl a cinn agus air cùl a h-amhaich: *except on the back of her head and the back of her neck*; tha an ròcas càirdeach dhi: *the rook is related to her*; timcheall a guib: *around her beak*; conaltradh nan eun: *conversation of the birds*; gum biodh e glè fhreagarrach do chloinn: *that it would be very suitable for children*; is e mo mhac-s' an garrach gorm: *my son is the blue chick*; 's e mo mhac-s' a chriomas uain: *it's my chick that picks the lambs' bones*; 's e mo mhac-s' an tighearna oirbh: *my son is the lord over all of you*.

**Puing-ghràmaid na seachdaine:** *I feel I should use this slot this week to fend off potential indignation on the part of some readers/listeners who will claim they have a different word for their 'crows' etc. Indeed so. In the text I mention that starrag may be used for the hooded crow but it may also mean a carrion crow in some places. Whereas some people refer to a scarecrow as bodach-ròcais, others call it a bodach-starraig. The jackdaw may also be called a cnàimh-fhitheach, coc-bhran or sorachag and the rook may be called a creumhach, garrag (as mentioned in the text) and garrag ghlas. And the hooded crow is sometimes referred to as a feannag chorrach. The raven seems to be almost universally a fitheach, although Dwelly also gives biadhtach. And the young of both a carrion crow and a rook may be known as a garrach – although it is hardly a recommendation, as you will see if you look it up in Dwelly. If you have any other words for members of this group of birds, I would love to hear from you.*

**Seanfhaclan na seachdaine:** Am fitheach a dh'èireas moch, 's ann leis a bhios sùil a' bheathaich a tha sa pholl: *the raven that rises early gets the eye of the beast (trapped) in the bog*. Cha toir am fitheach an t-sùil dha isean fhèin: *the raven won't give the eye (even) to his own chick*.

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