

## *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) \**

Thàinig deargan-sneachda don leas agam an là eile – no don ghàrradh agam, ma thogras sibh. Airson tiotan, shaoil mi gur e smeòrach a bh’ ann ach cha b’ e. Agus leis an fhirinn innse, ’s ann tearc a tha smeòraich anns an nàbaidheachd agam co-dhiù. An turas mu dheireadh a bha tè anns an leas, chaidh a marbhadh le cat agus lorg mi dìreach pìosan dhith. Agus, co-dhiù, bhithinn an dùil tè fhaicinn as t-samhradh, seach anns a’ gheamhradh. Mar a tha an sean-fhacal ag ràdh, *cha dèan aon smeòrach samhradh*. Tha fhios gu bheil sin co-ionann ris an t-sheanfhal Bheurla – *one swallow does not a summer make*. ’S e an aon seòrsa smuain ged is e eun eadar-dhealaichte anns gach cànan. Cha dèan aon smeòrach samhradh.

Ach, bha an samhradh seachad o chionn fhada, agus ’s iad eòin a’ gheamhraidh a tha a’ nochdadh a-nise – feadhainn a tha a’ fuireach fad na bliadhna a-bhos an seo, agus feadhainn eile a bhios a’ tadhal oirnn aig an àm seo a h-uile bliadhna. Agus ’s ann aig an àm seo no beagan roimhe a chithear an deargan-sneachda airson a’ chiad turas – goirid mus bi an sneachd ann.

’S e a’ Bheurla a th’ air an eun seo – *redwing*. Chì sibh gu bheil am facal *dearg* cudthromach anns an dà chànan oir ’s e sin an rud as mò a mhothaicheas tu nuair a chì thu an t-eun seo – gu bheil e dearg air a chliathaich agus aig bonn a sgiathan. Tha an t-ainm Beurla ag innse sin dhuinn, ach tha an t-ainm Gàidhlig ag innse barrachd. Deargan-sneachda – ’s ann tric a bhios sneachd air an talamh nuair a tha e a-bhos againn.

Mura h-eil sibh eòlach air an eun seo, nì mi tuairisgeul dheth dhuibh. Air mullach a chinn agus air a dhruim, tha e donn. Tha a ghob dubh-dhonn agus tha stiall bhàn os cionn a shùilean. Tha a sgiathan donn is dearg agus tha a bhroilleach bàn le breacadh dubh-dhonn air. Mura b’ e gu robh a sgiathan dearg, bhiodh e uabhasach coltach ri smeòrach. Gu dearbh, ’s e ainm eile air a shon – smeòrach an t-sneachda.

Buinidh an dà eun don aon ghnè de dh’eòin – na smeòraich – feadhainn a bhuineas don genus *Turdus*. ’S e an t-ainm saidheansail a th’ air an deargan-sneachda *Turdus iliacus*. ’S e a th’ air an smeòrach *Turdus philomelos*.

Ged a bhios an deargan-sneachda a’ neadachadh ann an Alba uaireannan, tha e nas cumanta ann an Lochlann is dùthchannan eile ann an ceann a tuath na Roinn Eòrpa. Bidh e ag ithe dearcagan – leithid an fheadhainn air a’ chraoibh-chaorainn agus air a’ chraoibh-iubhair. A bharrachd air sin, gabhaidh e beathaichean beaga mar bhaoiteagan, seilcheagan is pocannan-salainn. Agus, ann an ceann a tuath na Roinn Eòrpa anns a’ gheamhradh, leis gu bheil i cho fuar, bidh am biadh sin gu math gann.

Mar sin, bidh na h-eòin a’ dèanamh air Alba agus, ma dh’fhàsas i ro fhuar ann an seo, is mura h-eil biadh gu leòr ann, thèid iad gu deas airson greis, gus an till aimsir bhlàth an earraich.

Agus mar a thuirt mi, an seo air a’ Ghaidhealtachd, nuair a nochdas an deargan-sneachda airson a’ chiad turas anns an leas, faodaidh tu ràdh nach eil an sneachd fad-às. Mar sin, leis gu robh mi a’ feitheamh cothrom na sgithean agam a chur air mo chasan am-

bliadhna, bha mi air leth toilichte nuair a nochd e. Chuir mi fàilte mhòr air. Dìreach là as deidh sin, thàinig frasan sneachda agus, nuair a dh'èirich mi anns a' mhadainn, bha an talamh geal.

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**Faclan na seachdaine:** deargan-sneachda: *redwing*; leas: *garden*; a' tadhal (air): *visiting*; saidheansail: *scientific*; Lochlann: *Scandinavia*; dearcagan: *berries*; gann: *scarce*.

**Abairtean na seachdaine:** no don ghàrradh agam, ma thogras sibh: *or to my 'gàrradh' (another word for garden), if you like (prefer)*; 's ann tearc a tha smeòraich anns an nàbaidheachd agam: *thrushes are rare in my neighbourhood*; lorg mi dìreach pìosan dhith: *I just found pieces of her*; 's iad eòin a' gheamhraidh a tha a' nochdadh: *it is the birds of the winter that are appearing*; 's e sin a rud as mò a mhothaicheas tu nuair a chì thu an t-eun seo: *that is the thing you most notice when you see this bird*; air a chliathaich agus aig bonn a sgiathan: *on its side and at the base of its wings*; nuair a tha e a-bhos againn: *when it is with us*; nì mi tuairisgeul dheth dhuibh: *I will describe it for you*; tha stiall bhàn os cionn a shùilean: *there is a white streak above its eyes*; tha a bhroilleach bàn le breacadh dubh-dhonn air: *its (masc.) breast is white with dark brown spotting on it*; buinidh an dà eun don aon ghnè de dh'eòin: *the two birds belong to the same group of birds*; air a' chraoibh-chaorainn agus air a' chraoibh-iubhair: *on the rowan tree and on the yew tree*; beathaichean beaga mar bhaoiteagan, seilcheagan is pocannan-salainn: *small animals such as worms, snails and spiders*; bidh na h-eòin a' dèanamh air Alba: *the birds will make for Scotland*; gus an till aimsir bhlàth an earraich: *until the warm weather of spring returns*; leis gu robh mi a' feitheamh cothrom na sgithean agam a chur air mo chasan: *since I was waiting for an opportunity to put my skis on my feet*.

**Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine:** a chithear an deargan-sneachda airson a' chiad turas: *that the redwing is seen for the first time. Before a grammatically aware reader (which should be all of you!) picks up on the non-inflection of the word turas here, I thought I had better explain myself! By the grammatical rules, following the compound preposition airson, the noun turas should be in the genitive case and therefore should be slenderised to turais. While some Gaelic-speakers may still treat turas in this way, most do not. The rules appear to bend around it. While other words dealing with time generally follow the rules eg bha mi ann airson na bliadhna air fad, tha e an seo airson na seachdaine, people generally say, for example, tha mi deiseil airson an turas agam (not turais). This avoidance of the rule is not so common when the genitive is employed as an indicator of possession eg you would be more likely to hear 's e sin adhbhar mo thurais than 's e sin adhbhar mo thuras. And, of course, the established word for 'tourists' is, quite rightly, luchd-turais, not luchd-turas. I have to admit I cannot explain this seeming anomaly. If someone out there can assist me with an explanation, I would be pleased to hear from them.*

**Seanfhacal na seachdaine:** Cha dèan aon smeòrach samhradh: *one thrush does not make a summer. A Gaelic equivalent for the English proverb 'one swallow does not a summer make'.*

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