

An Litir Bheag

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

An Litir Bheag is a shortened and simplified version of Ruairidh's Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh (also available on the BBC website), designed for those who are at an earlier stage of learning Gaelic. The topic each week is the same as Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh so that, once the Litir Bheag is mastered, a student of the language might wish to try the full Litir. This is Litir Bheag 795 (which corresponds to Litir 1,099). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

What sound does a [wee] mouse make? Does it roar or bark? Or does it hum or howl? Does it make a difference if the mouse is happy rather than unhappy? Or confident instead of fearful? Well, I must admit I'm not too familiar with the speech of mice. But I can say that a mouse doesn't roar or bark!

We call the sound a mouse makes bìogail or bìdil – squeaking or chirping. Little birds also squeak.

What is beucaich, then? In English we call it 'roaring' or 'bellowing'. Beucaich is the sound the sea makes on a stormy day. We also call the cry that the roebuck makes 'beucaich'.

And comhartaich? That's the sound [bark] a dog makes. And crònan? Crònan means 'the buzzing of a fly or bee'. If a mouse heard crònan, perhaps it would be scared. Why? Well, that's the sound a cat makes when it's pleased. There is a proverb: 'S ann air a shon fhèin a nì an cat crònan 'it's for itself the cat purrs. 'S ann air a shon fhèin a nì an cat crònan.

Dè am fuaim a bhios luchag a' dèanamh? Am bi i a' beucaich no a' comhartaich? No am bi i a' crònan, no a' donnalaich? A bheil e gu diofar ma tha an luchag toilichte seach mì-thoilichte? No misneachail an àite eagallach? Uill, feumaidh mi aideachadh nach eil mi ro eòlach air cainnt nan luchag. Ach faodaidh mi a ràdh nach bi luchag a' beucaich no a' comhartaich!

Canaidh sinn bìogail no bìdil ris an fhuaim a bhios luchag a' dèanamh – squeaking no chirping. Bidh eòin bheaga a' bìogail cuideachd.

Dè tha ann am beucaich, ma-thà? Ann am Beurla, canaidh sinn roaring no bellowing ris. 'S e beucaich am fuaim a nì a' mhuir air latha stoirmeil. Bidh sinn cuideachd ag ràdh 'beucaich' ris an fhuaim a bhios boc-earba a' dèanamh.

Agus comhartaich? 'S e sin am fuaim a nì cù. Agus crònan? Tha crònan a' ciallachadh 'the buzzing of a fly or bee'. Nan cluinneadh luchag crònan, 's dòcha gum biodh i a' gabhail eagail. Carson? Uill, tha e cuideachd a' ciallachadh an fhuaim a nì cat nuair a tha e toilichte. Tha seanfhacal ann: 'S ann air a shon fhèin a nì an cat crònan 'it's for itself the cat purrs. 'S ann air a shon fhèin a nì an cat crònan.

<p><i>What about donnal or donnalaich? That's the loud sound that a dog makes when it's in pain. Howling. Wolves howl naturally.</i></p> <p><i>And what do we call the great sound that stags make? That's langanaich. Lowing, bellowing. Langanach. At the time of the rut, we call it bùirich. Bùirich – loud bellowing.</i></p> <p><i>What's the other animal, in addition to the stag, that bellows? I'd say myself – a bull. And perhaps an elephant. But there is another word – blosg or a' blosgadh 'making a sound like a trumpet'. And dùdaireachd – the sound a dùdach – bugle or hunting horn – makes. Perhaps that's we [should] call an elephant's sound. But it's not often we see or hear an elephant in Scotland!</i></p>	<p>Dè mu dheidhinn donnal no donnalaich? 'S e sin am fuaim àrd a bhios cù a' dèanamh nuair a tha e ann am pian. <i>Howling.</i> Bidh madaidhean-allaidh a' donnalaich gu nàdarrach.</p> <p>Agus dè chanas sinn ris an fhuaim mhòr a bhios daimh a' dèanamh? 'S e sin langanaich. <i>Lowing, bellowing.</i> Langanach. Aig àm na dàra, canaidh sinn <i>bùirich</i> ris. Bùirich – <i>loud bellowing.</i></p> <p>Dè am beathach eile, a bharrachd air damh, a bhios a' bùirich? Chanainn fhèin – tarbh. Agus 's dòcha ailbhean. Ach tha facal eile ann – <i>blosg</i> no <i>a' blosgadh</i> 'a' dèanamh fuaim mar thrombaid'. Agus <i>dùdaireachd</i> – am fuaim a bhios <i>dùdach</i> – <i>bugle</i> no <i>hunting horn</i> – a' dèanamh. 'S dòcha gur e sin a chanas sinn ri fuaim ailbhein. Ach chan ann tric a chì sinn no a chluinneas sinn ailbhean ann an Alba!</p>
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