

This is some writing we did in class after the summer holidays, in August, so all the children have moved up a class from the pieces they did the previous May and June.

This time there was no focus on a particular convention so the children were free to write about the sights, sounds and feelings they remembered from the field visits without having to twist the grammar or choose words that started with a particular letter as they had to do for the acrostic poetry. Despite there being a few months between the visits and the writing lesson they still had vivid memories of the area. It is also interesting to see how similar some children's poetry was (especially Olivia) in the themes they described, despite the interlude of the summer holidays.

Here are the translations again. (and apologies for sending all this now, when you are trying to write up the report, and not sending it whenever the children had written it.)

ALEX

The birds were singing in the heavens.

I found a nest with chicks in it.

I saw mountains, sometimes they were dark, then bright.

The birds were flying in the heavens.

I looked around me and I saw a wood.

BETHAN

A beautiful day beside the loch.

The large mountains standing, high and grand.

And the birds singing in my ears,

While the sun was shining on the hills.

The oyster-catcher was shouting "Be wise. Be wise!"

And the lapwing was flying like a black and white ball.

The lark sang and the swan swam on the loch.

Eventually (or "at long last") we saw a sea-eagle

Rising through the air.

We walked to the bus

As evening came.

We all enjoyed our trip to Loch Ba.

And the next time my father goes up there

I'll go with him.

(Bethan and Olivia's dad is Dave Sexton, the RSPB officer that we met at his landrover at Loch Ba - with his telescopes that didn't find a sea eagle for Rosanna Cunningham).

GUN AINM

We took a walk at Loch Ba.

There were lots of lovely birds such as

A cuckoo shouting "Cuckoo, Cuckoo".

A very badly behaved oyster-catcher.

Above us a sea eagle on the wing.

What a large bird and wild!

A lark doing lots of things like

Singing, warbling and whistling.

It was very hot at Loch Ba but

It was good.

HANNAH

I looked around me, it was quiet,
But I heard a lark singing softly and peacefully.
I listened to him for a while and a warm and happy feeling came over me.
I walked around and I sat down on a rock. There was another sound now,
The noise of an oyster catcher, "Be wise, Be wise!" he said
High up with his wings stretched out.
He came down with a soft "thump".
He lay down on a nest, quiet, hiding from enemies.
The day was very special to me!

MURDO

A lovely day at Loch Ba.
The loch was so shiny
Like a large, blue mirror.
I heard birds around me
Among the trees,
Such as the cuckoo shouting
His own name.
On each side there were mountains
As big as giants.
In the river there were stones
As big as elephants.
After a busy day walking
We were dog tired.

OLIVIA

Loch Ba, so lovely,
With many gorgeous birds, like the oyster catcher shouting
"Be wise, Be wise!". I heard the cuckoo and lark singing
So beautifully and gently. The sea eagle with a high voice
Screeching, but when we were there, he was so dumb when they were hunting.
I saw high and silent mountains.
The loch was like a mirror, with two swans as pretty as a flower and as
White as the snow.
A happy day and warm that I enjoyed very much.

SCOTT

A lovely day at Loch Ba.
No noise but for the birds.
Extremely peaceful and pretty.
I looked around me and
I heard an oyster catcher shouting
"Be wise, Be wise!" near a nest.
I looked up and there was a sea eagle flying above me, silent and beautiful.
I listened to the lark

Who was singing so musically and happily, contented.
I enjoyed the trip beside Loch Ba.
I would like to go there again, along with my family.
I would think that it is a special place to be, for me and for many others.

It is very interesting to re examine their work after some time has passed. I notice that the adder does not get a mention in a single poem after the holidays but every single child has mentioned seeing or hearing birds. I didn't think that they had noticed much about the birdlife when we were actually out there. I felt that the adults were having to point these things out to them on a constant basis. I remember having to work quite hard to get them to use their ears especially, as some of them didn't seem to hear the cuckoos that were in every grove on both sides of the loch. Some of them were quite good at visually recognising the oyster catcher and the lapwing. There's a good chance that my lesson introduction maybe suggested these ideas to them, though the choice and use of the ideas are very individual. It could be very interesting to go out and about this springtime to see if they can recognise more birdsong this year without as much adult input.

Over the 3 visits last year we did see and hear each of the species they mention, including lapwing chicks running around. The oyster catcher says "Bi glic. Bi glic!" in Gaelic, which translates as Be wise (or sensible). This is also the motto and emblem of the Scottish Police force, which originally had a black and white uniform, with a black and white chequered band around the hat.

By the way, we were all standing in the school playground today watching a pair of sea eagles circling above our school roof. They were also being mobbed by gulls.

I've also been thinking about the ingredients for outdoor work. I think I'd like to add "trust" or "respect" to the list. The children have to trust that you will keep them safe but allow them to make decisions regarding sensible "risk" such as whether or not to get their feet wet on a summer's day; and you have to be able to trust them to be sensible and not to show off (which nearly always results in an avoidable accident or discomfort to themselves or others) or to disrespect the place, wildlife or the people who live and work there.