

NIGHTINGALE



NIGHTS

Petition to the BBC (via Springwatch) – 19 May 2015

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/p/nightingales>

Dear BBC

Please bring the magic of Nightingale song to people all over Britain this May, by broadcasting it live from our woods or countryside. Local and national radio and tv have the power to do this, and at a stroke, to improve the quality of our lives. Please invite singers or musicians along, as in the historic first ever Outside Broadcast which featured a Nightingale responding to a Cello in 1924. It would also raise awareness of the need to help these vanishing magical songsters. So few birds are left, that there are now more people in Britain called 'Nightingale' than there are real live singing Nightingales.

Why is this important?

Anyone who has ever heard the song of a Nightingale, knows the extraordinary heart-lifting, soul-penetrating power of the voice of this bird. For a few brief weeks in April and May, the males sing at night to attract the attention of females on migration, flying overhead.

For hundreds of years, people from all walks of life stopped to listen: poets, artists, singers, lyricists, woodsmen, passers by and householders lucky enough to live within earshot. The liquid outpouring of song lets us know Spring is here in all its glory and has inspired folk songs, art and plays as well as leaving its name in such humble places such as 'Nightingale Lane'.

Nightingales were always part of what made life worth living but now their voice is fading.

Between 1966 and 2008 their numbers fell 91%. Since then the decline has continued. Even in their traditional strongholds in SE England, where Nightingales were common enough to be caught for cage birds in Victorian times and pairs were counted by the hundred in the 1950s, a site with a dozen singing Nightingales is now exceptional. On present trends, this bird that inspired Keats and Chaucer, faces extinction in England.

So unless something is done, we may soon only have place names, surnames and Nightingales in books, art and literature to remind us that we once shared this land with the magical songster. At the last count (2012) there were thought to be under 5,850 Nightingales left alive and singing in England. They have been lost from Wales, from across the North and almost all of the Midlands and the South West, and are rapidly dwindling almost everywhere.

In stories the Nightingale is often associated with tragedy and betrayal as well as with love and joy. So let's celebrate Nightingales and not betray them by forgetting. There are now 12,000 people living in Britain for every singing Nightingale. So if you can, grab the rare chance to hear the real thing and reconnect with this sublime piece of nature.

And, because only the media has the reach to share the experience with everyone, ask your local radio station to come along, as well as signing this petition, and sharing it with your friends.

The first BBC Outside Broadcast back in the 1920s was so popular that it was continued every year for almost 20 years. Re-starting that tradition might help ensure Nightingales are still around to marvel at in the 2020s.

Support the campaign for a national Nightingale Night (May 2 - 9) at www.nightingalenights.org.uk and @NgaleNights so the whole country tunes in to Nightingales once more.

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You can find events already organised to go out and hear our remaining Nightingales at the website. We've also listed some more of the places where they may still be heard but we need help. Broadcasters, singers and musicians can help by celebrating local singing Nightingales. Friends and families can capture their own recordings - add them to our SoundCloud site.

There is a bigger picture. Lots of evidence shows both that each passing generation has become less connected with nature, and that connection to nature is good for us, especially for children.

So help give our children the opportunity to hear Nightingales sing, by supporting the campaigns to save their remaining populations from destruction of their nesting sites, and by backing efforts to help this wonderful bird, which also faces pressures from deer grazing in woods, pesticides and climate change.

Also, the Nightingale is but one of many songbirds, which for similar reasons, are rapidly vanishing from our countryside, our urban green sanctuaries and suburban woods, and thus from our lives (gu.com/p/3zcv3/tw). Its loss would be part of what some call, "the extinction of experience", and as David Attenborough said "No one will protect what they don't care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced". That is a vicious spiral which you can help break.

Yours sincerely

Chris Rose, Phil Rothwell and 2,801 others

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