ANIMAL
FOLK SONGS FOR
CHILDREN
FOR CHILDREN
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Animal Folk Songs for Children

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ANIMAL FOLK SONGS FOR CHILDREN

Selected from Ruth Crawford Seeger's
Animal Folk Songs for Children
(Doubleday and Co., 1950)
Sung and played by her daughter, Peggy

Her oldest daughter, Peggy, sings and plays the songs on this disc. She grew up with them, hearing the records and helping in the transcription and music copying for books. Special thanks go to Ewan MacColl, in England, for his advice and painstaking care in making the recording.

NOTES ON THE SONGS

RACCOON AND POSSUM - Sung by Fields Ward of Virginia, this song is heard also in Mississippi and other states under the title "Rove, Riley, Rove" (one of many titles). It has a common melody-text pattern which not only gathers numerous verses from other songs, but which is often absorbed itself into songs which have a chorus or a longer melody structure. - From the Lomax collection in the Archive of American Folk Song, Library of Congress.

MISTER RABBIT - The dialogue form in this Negro song from Virginia is characteristic. Rabbits were "favorite for meals and folk songs" and the rabbit myth, common in Negro song and story, embodies the theme of the clever small animal who invariably gets the best of the larger and more powerful ones, or who always survives any hardships cheerfully. - From On the Trail of Negro Folk Songs, by Dorothy Scarborough.

PEEP SQUIRREL - Mrs. Seeger writes: "In Alabama, this is played as a chasing game. Two Squirrels are behind two posts. They peep, walk, jump, skip, in any order dictated by the song. When the running begins, the squirrel who is "it" starts chasing the other. Sometimes the song goes on to killing and cooking." From the singing of Hettie Godfrey and Celina Lewis, in the Lomax Collection, Archive.

A SQUIRREL IS A PRETTY THING - This song from Arkansas is a fragment of "Pains in My Fingers", a slave song sung before the Civil War. In other variants animals other than the squirrel are named and comparison made between their physical makeup, much as in "Raccoon and Possum". - Source: see "Mister Rabbit".

CROSS-EYED GOPHER - Sung by Thaddeus Willingham, a farmer in Gulfport, Mississippi. The melodies he sings, including the "Cross-Eyed Gopher", were handed down to him through his family, who at one time were plantation owners. His banjo style has been closely imitated in the present accompaniment. - From the Halpert collection, in the Archive.
MUSKRAT - Sung by Austin Harmon, in Tennessee, one of the "grand old men" among American folk-singers. This bit could either be a fragment of a longer song or a jingle: the like of which a farmer might hit upon while plowing. It echoes fragments of "Stagolee" in the first line and "The Roving Gambler" in the last. - From the Halpert collection, in the Archive.

SNAKE BAKED A HOECAKE - This song, from Pennsylvania, speaks for itself. - From "American Folksong and The Total Culture", Music Publisher's Journal, July-Oct. 1944.

LITTLE LAP-DOG LULLABY - An Alabama Negro lullaby, which invites improvisation of additional stanzas. - From the singing of Vera Hall, in the Lomax collection, in the Archive.

LITTLE BROWN DOG - Sung originally by Mrs. Birmah H. Grisson, of Lee County, Mississippi, who learned it as a child from her mother (although Peggy found the concluding verse elsewhere), for grown people as well as children make fabulous animals out of familiar ones. Another variant of this song is to be found in Mrs. Seeger's American Folk Songs for Children, under the title "Toll a Winker". - From the Halpert collection in the Archive.

OH, BLUE - This particular variant of the widely known song was sung by the Scruggs family of Tishomingo, Mississippi. Old Blue is a familiar figure in the American folk song and is treated therein like a member of the family. - From the Halpert collection, in the Archive.

THE DEER SONG - Found under other titles ("Sally Buck", "The Crooked Gun"), this ridiculous tall tale of a deer hunt has a distinguishing and unusual mark: the pause taken in place of the last syllable of the 4th line and its completion in the 5th. - From the singing of Bascom Lamar Lunsford, Artus Moser collection in the Archive.

AND WE HUNTED AND WE HUNTED - Descended from the "Three Jolly Welshmen" (and similar songs from Great Britain), the theme of this song is found from Nova Scotia down to West Virginia and Missouri, whence came this version. The chief characteristics of the British versions are retained, although the length of the song verse has been shortened slightly. Several of the verses sung on this record were improvised by children who wanted to keep the song going in search of variety after the regular verses were exhausted. - From Ballads and Songs, ed. by H. M. Belden.

OLD LADY GOOSE - This negro song from Mississippi incorporates one of the staple ingredients of American folk song, the calling of animals, in which almost infinite pains and practice went into imitation of sounds which animals made or were expected to respond to. - From the singing of Irene Williams, Lomax collection, in the Archive.

MY OLD HEN'S A GOOD OLD HEN - It is possible that this song is derived from or related to the middle tune "Cluck Old Hen". - From the singing of Pearl Borusky, Antigo, Wisconsin; Robert Draves collection, in the Archive.

THERE WAS AN OLD FROG - Sung by early black-face minstrels, this song from Arkansas is based on an English nonsensical rhyme (a rhyme become so common that it has been used for college yells in North Carolina). It is a close relationship to the "Frog's Courtship" with which it often has verses in common. - From Ozark Folksongs, Vols. II and III, by Vance Randolph.

THE OLD COW DIED - Elizabeth Cotten, of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, a great-great-grandmother at 60, has a wealth of music in her and knows many such songs as this. It is a variant of "Did You Go to the Barney?" in American Folk Songs for Children, by Ruth Seeger.

THE BIG SHEEP - This Tennessee descendant of the well known British tall tale ("The Derby Ram") has been found everywhere that English influence went. Said to have been George Washington's favorite song, it was popularized in about the 1890's in the old song hit "O, Didn't He Ramble?" - From the singing of Austin Harmon, Halpert collection, in the Archive.

GO TO SLEEP - Sung by Florida Hampton, of Alabama, this lullaby is a variant of the widely known "All the Pretty Little Horses". - From the Lomax collection, in the Archive.

RIDING ROUND THE CATTLE - This rousing Texas boast is a direct descendant of "Old Chisholm Trail", one of the most popular of the cowboy songs, to which there are literally hundreds of couplets giving every facet of life of the cowboy, from who his companions are, what sort of weather they are having, how the cattle are behaving,
to what it is like to be in town after weeks on the
range. - From the singing of Mose Platt, Lomax
collection, in the Archive.

OF ALL THE BEAST-ES - A texas tune with a stan-
zza from Alabama. - From the singing of J. L.
Goree (and Mary Ann James, Alabama), in the
Lomax collection, in the Archive.

JACK, CAN I RIDE? - This is undoubtedly urban
as well as rural folklore and has elements direct
from Mother Goose. - From the singing of Ed
Jones, Alabama; Lomax collection, in the Ar-
chive.

DADDY SHOT A BEAR -( Moe: just list the words )
also from the Lomax collection in the Archives,
sung by Annie Brewer, Alabama.
NOTE: A bibliography can be found in ANIMAL
FOLK SONGS FOR CHILDREN.

ANIMAL FOLK SONGS FOR CHILDREN
Peggy Seeger

SIDE I

LITTLE BROWN DOG (Page 28)
I buyed me a little dog, its color it was brown,
I learned him to whistle, sing, dance and run,
His legs they were fourteen yards long, his ears
they were broad,
Around the world in half a day on him I could ride.
Sing taddle-o-day.

I buyed me a little bull, about four inches high,
Everybody feared him that ever heard him cry,
When he begin to bellow, it made such melodious
sound,
Till all the walls from London came a-tumbling to
the ground.
Sing taddle-o-day.

I buyed me a flock of sheep, I thought they were
all wethers,
Sometimes they yielded wool, sometimes they
yielded feathers,
I think mine are the best of sheep for yielding me
increase,
For every full and change of the moon they bring
both lambs and geese.
Sing taddle-o-day.

I buyed me a little box about four acres square,
I filled it with guinea and silver so fair,
Oh, now I'm bound for Turkey, I'll travel like an
ox,
In my breeches pocket I'll carry my little box.
Sing taddle-o-day.

I buyed me a little hen, all speckled, gay and fair;
I sat her on an oyster shell she hatched me out a
hair,
The hair it sprang a handsome horse full fifteen
hands-full high,
And him that tells a bigger tale would have to tell
a lie.
Sing taddle-o-day.

OH, BLUE (Page 30)
Had a dog and his name was Blue,
Bet your life he's a runner, too,
Oh, Blue, Blue, Blue, oh, Blue.

Every night just about good dark
Blue goes out and begins to bark.

(REFRAIN)
Everything just in a rush,
He tred a possum up a white-oak bush.

(REFRAIN)
Possum walked out on the end of a limb,
Blue set down and talked to him.

(REFRAIN)
Blue got sick and very sick,
Sent for the doctor to come quick.

(REFRAIN)
Doctor come and he come in a run,
Says, "Old Blue, your huntin's done."

(REFRAIN)
Blue died and he died so hard,
Scratched little holes all around in the yard.

(REFRAIN)
Laid him out in a shady place,
Covered him over with a possum's face.

(REFRAIN)
THE DEER SONG (Sally Buck) (Page 34)

On a bright and summer's morning,
The ground all covered with snow,
I put my shoulder to my gun,
And a-hunting I did... And a-hunting I did go.

I came across a herd of deer,
And I trailed through the snow,
I trailed them through the mountains
Where straight up they did... Where straight up they did go.

I went up yonder river
That ran up yonder hill,
And there I spied the herd of deer
And in it they did... And in it they did dwell.

Soon as the buck they saw me,
Like devils they did run
To the bottom of the river
And squat upon the... And squat upon the ground.

Then I went under water,
Five hundred feet or more,
I fired off my pistols,
Like cannon they did... Like cannon they did roar.

I fired away among the buck,
At length I killed one,
The rest stuck up their bristles,
And at me they did... And at me they did come.

I fought them with my broadsword,
Six hours I held them play,
I killed three hundred and fifty,
The rest they ran a... The rest they ran away.

I gathered up my venison
And out of the waters went,
To seek and kill all those that fled,
It was my whole in... It was my whole intent.

I bent my gun in a circle,
And shot all round the hill,
And out of five-andtwenty deer
Ten thousand I did... Ten thousand I did kill.

I went up on the mountain,
Beyond the peak so high,
The moon come round with lightning speed,
"I'll take a ride," says... "I'll take a ride," says I.

He carried me all round this world,
All round the swelling tide,
The stars they brought my venison,
So merrily I did... So merrily I did ride.

The moon came round the mountain,
It took a sudden whirl,
And my foot slipped and I fell out,
And landed in this... And landed in this world.

The money that I got for
The venison skin
I hauled it to my daddy's barn,
And it wouldn't half go... It wouldn't half go in.

AND WE HUNTED AND WE HUNTED (Three Jolly Welshmen) (Page 36)

And we hunted and we hunted and we hunted and we found
A pig in the lane and him we left behind - lookee there!
Some said it was a pig, but others said nay,
Some said it was an elephant with its snout shot away - lookee there!

FORM:
And we hunted and we hunted and we hunted and we found ________, and him we left behind - lookee there!
Some said it was a ________, but others said nay,
Some said it was a ________ with ________ - lookee there!

A frog in the well - a canary with his feathers washed away
An owl in an ivy bush - the devil and we all ran away
A barn in the meadow - a church with the steeple washed away
A ship in full sail -- a washtub with the clothes hung out to dry
A ball in the road -- a turtle with its legs tucked away
A child in the bed -- a pony gone to sleep on the hay
A SQUIRREL IS A PRETTY THING  (Page 19)
A squirrel is a pretty thing,
He carries a pretty tail,
He eats all the farmer's corn
And husks it on the rail.

SNAKE BAKED A HOECAKE  (Page 24)
The snake baked a hoecake, and set the frog to
watch it,
The frog fell a-dozing, and the lizard came and
took it,
Bring back my hoecake you long-tailed nanny-o.

OLD LADY GOOSE  (Page 40)
Introductory refrain: (may be repeated)

Old lady goose, done turned her loose,
Where am that old lady goose, goose, goose, goose?
Looked down the pasture, looked down the lane,
Can't find the old lady goose again.

(REFRAIN)

Old lady goose, goose, goose, goose, goose,
Can anybody find my old lady goose?
I's just like that old lady goose,
Whenever I is turned a-loose.

(REFRAIN)

Old lady goose just a-settin' in the pasture,
And I went down right there after her.

(REFRAIN)

MY OLD HEN'S GOOD OLD HEN  (Cluck old hen)  (Page 44)

My old hen's a good old hen,
She lays eggs for the section man.
Sometimes one, sometimes two,
Sometimes enough for the whole blamed crew.

Refrain:
Cluck, old hen, cluck, I tell you,
Cluck, old hen, or I'm a-going to sell you,
Cluck, old hen, cluck, I say,
Cluck, old hen, or I'll give you away.
My old hen's a good old hen,
She lays eggs for the railroad men.
Sometimes one, sometimes two,
Sometimes enough for the president too.

(REFRAIN)

OF ALL THE BEAST-ES (I'd rather be a panther)

Of all the beast-es in the world,
I'd rather be a panther,
I'd crawl upon some lonesome hill,
And cry for Susanna.

Of all the beast-es in the world,
I'd rather be a panther,
Eat all the chickens down the line
And turkeys in Atlanta.