



# FLOCK TOGETHER

A Swale community arts project created by



CREATIVE  
SCHOOLS  
NETWORK

TEACHER'S PROJECT PACK

Autumn 2023

Created by  
Local artists Lucy Stockton Smith & Jo Dyer from

**animate**  
**arts**  
**company**

## Introduction

Following discussions at the Swale Creative Schools Network meet-ups, teachers were interested in taking part in a collaborative arts project that any school from the Swale region could take part in. Teachers wanted to work together, raise the profile of their pupils' creativity and learn new skills in the process. And so, to take this forward and to mark the first year of the Swale Creative School Network, we introduce the 'Flock Together' project.

**"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."**

Helen Keller

The Swale Cultural Education Partnership, which umbrellas the Swale Creative Schools Network, is keen to foster more partnerships between schools and arts & cultural providers in Swale. This project will also offer an opportunity for local artists, cultural hubs, venues and organisations to connect with schools.

# FLOCK TOGETHER

Swale schools are invited to create an A2-sized artwork, inspired by Swale's nature, particularly the migrating birds that flock in Swale and take their onward journeys together. With its rich landscape and habitats, Swale continues to provide inspiration to many artists ... and we hope to a young generation of local artists through this project.

This Teacher's Pack, with activities designed by local artist Lucy Stockton-Smith from Animate Arts, provides teachers with a toolkit of low-cost printing techniques to create a poster-artwork for this project. (There are also a few extra activities for you to explore if you wish to take the project further).

Once your school's artwork is created, the poster will be paired with a participating venue, such as a theatre, library, shop or gallery. We will build an art trail of Flock Together posters around Swale. You'll be able to find your poster (and others) on the official Flock Together online map, which can be found on the Swale Cultural Education Partnership's website.

The Flock Together art trail is scheduled to be displayed in January 2024. It will bring together Swale's young people through their creativity and offer the local community an exhibition of art on their doorstep!



We are inviting you, as a Swale school, to create an A3 poster-artwork, featuring a flock of Swale birds. Your birds can be printed from simple, hand-crafted printing stamps, as this step-by-step demonstrates below.

You may choose for individual pupils to create their own bird stamp to represent themselves, and/or print the final piece as a collaborative group process. The format and composition of your poster is up to you. Be creative with the printing brief – but do keep to the theme and an A3 sized poster, so that the art trail has continuity!

## **HOW TO MAKE A BIRD STAMP**

### **Things you will need:**

Paper sheet of bird silhouettes (*see page 6*)

Scissors

Glue stick

Craft foam sheets or shapes

A stamp handle

(*such as a wooden block, plastic bottle top, or wooden door handle*)

Ink pad or printing inks

Practise stamping paper

Final artwork - A3 paper

## **Instructions:**

**1.**

**Choose a bird silhouette on the sheet provided or draw a bird on paper.  
Cut it away from the sheet allowing a generous amount of white  
background around the bird shape.**

**2.**

**Cut a similar sized piece of foam sheet.**

**3.**

**Use a glue stick to glue your paper to the foam.  
Allow a moment for the glue to dry.**

**4.**

**With the paper and foam stuck together, cut around the outline  
of the silhouette of the bird to make the shape in the foam at the same time.**

**5.**

**Peel away the paper from the foam.**

**6.**

**Glue the foam to a stamper handle.**

**TIP: You can use plastic bottle tops, or door handles,  
or blocks of wood to provide a firm, flat surface for your stamper.**

**Allow to dry.**

**7.**

**Use an ink pad to ink up the foam shape.  
Stamp your silhouette onto paper.**

**8.**

**Practise and create.**

**Repeat printing the shape and watch the effect of the fading ink  
which can give a sense of depth and space to your picture.**

**Create your own composition, there is no right or wrong. You can make a tight flock flying  
together or arrange the birds to be flying further apart.**

**Try a different silhouette or swap stampers with  
someone else to add some variation to your murmuration.**

## **LUCY'S TROUBLESHOOTING TIPS (including ways to adapt your tools/materials)**

### **Glue**

I have found glue sticks to work well for sticking foam to wood or plastic. If you use PVA be careful not to get glue onto the top of the foam as it will prevent your stamp from taking on the ink. Don't be tempted to use super glues as these will melt the foam! Double-sided sticky tape also works well but it must be used to adhere the entire surface of the foam silhouette.

### **Silhouettes**

You have a starter sheet ready made for you. If you like you can change the scale by printing the sheet up larger. As an extension you can find pictures of Swale birds online or take your own, print them and cut out the shapes to create new silhouettes. Sometimes these shapes can look a little strange but they are effective when made into a flock as they express the movement of flight.

### **Printing Materials**

I find the thin foam to be most effective for this kind of printmaking as it absorbs and distributes the inks really well. Do feel free to experiment with other found materials if you like though. Cardboard can work but it does not transfer the ink so well and works best with larger shapes to make up for this. It's possible to use polystyrene packing but it's hard to cut, very very crumbly and can make quite a mess. Traditional potato printing works well but it really needs a knife to work so isn't as accessible for most groups.

### **Printing Inks**

Small ink pads are tidy and containable. Black is the most common colour and is very effective. It is also possible to use block inks which need to be rolled out on a washable surface with a brayer to make a smooth ink base to press the stamps into. It is possible to use paint as well but it will need to be a very small quantity so as not to get too splashy. If you experiment with larger silhouettes you might find it easier to use a brayer to apply ink to the larger shape before it's pressed onto the paper. You will get inky fingers!

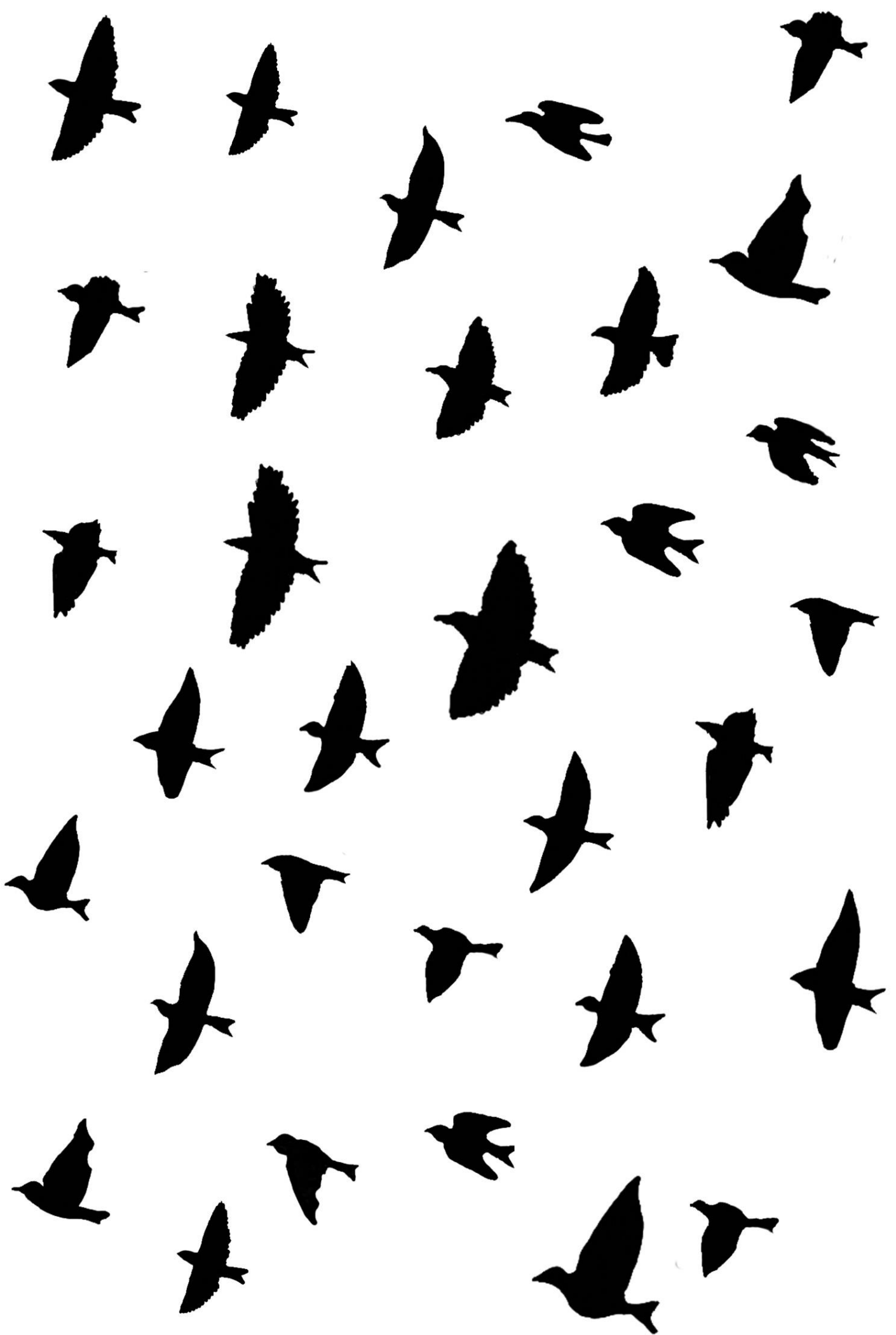
### **Paper**

Print onto paper which will absorb the ink. Shiny surfaces don't work so well.

## **SUBMITTING YOUR ARTWORK**

Once you have completed your artwork, please contact [jo.and.em.swaleCSN@animateartscompany.com](mailto:jo.and.em.swaleCSN@animateartscompany.com) to make arrangements for your school's posters to enter the art trail. Alternatively you may choose to deliver/post your poster to Animate Arts, Alexander Centre, 17 Preston Street, Faversham, Kent ME13 8NZ

Deadline for submissions: Wednesday 22 November 2023



*TO PRINT: Bird silhouettes (these can be scaled up or down with your printer settings)*

## EXTRA RESOURCES

### Native Birds in Swale

Swale National Nature Reserve and surrounds is remote (for the UK) and very atmospheric. The main birds found here in winter are high tide waders and roosters including **Sanderling, Dunlin, Grey Plover** and **Bar-tailed Godwit**.

The wide open areas in the marshes attract hunting birds of prey like **Merlin, Hen Harrier** and **Marsh Harrier**

Whilst in the wet meadows, particularly when flooded, thousands of wildfowl and waders, notably **Greater White-fronted Goose**, **European Golden Plover** and **Eurasian Curlew** gather.

Further links about birds in Swale:

[Meet The Birds | Bird Wise North Kent](#)

[Be Bird Wise And Take A Walk On The Wild Side Around Faversham - Visit Swale \(visit-swale.co.uk\)](#)

[South Swale NR Birdwatching Site - BirdGuides](#)

### Flocking & Murmurations

Flocking is the behaviour exhibited when a group of birds, called a flock, are foraging or in flight.

When starlings flock together (typically in the winter months) in huge groups, they twist, turn, swoop and swirl to create formations across the sky like beautiful shape-shifting clouds.



Image by Daniel Biber, Germany, 2018

# Starlings in Winter

by Mary Oliver

*from Owls and Other Fantasies: Poems and Essays*

Chunky and noisy,  
but with stars in their black  
feathers,  
they spring from the telephone wire  
and instantly

they are acrobats  
in the freezing wind.  
And now, in the theatre of air,  
they swing over buildings,

dipping and rising;  
they float like one stippled  
star  
that opens,  
becomes for a moment  
fragmented,

then closes again;  
and you watch  
and you try  
but you simply can't imagine

how they do it  
with no articulated  
instruction, no pause,  
only the silent confirmation  
that they are this notable  
thing,

this wheel of many parts, that  
can rise and spin  
over and over again,  
full of gorgeous life.  
Ah, world, what lessons you  
prepare for us,

even in the leafless winter,  
even in the ashy city.  
I am thinking now  
of grief, and of getting past  
it;

I feel my boots  
trying to leave the ground,  
I feel my heart  
pumping hard, I want

to think again of dangerous and noble things.  
I want to be light and frolicsome.  
I want to be improbable beautiful and afraid  
of nothing,  
as though I had wings.



## KENT ARTISTS INSPIRED BY BIRDS

### Andy Malone

Collage artist



### Stephen Message

Wildlife artist



### Alan Wollett

Painter



### Emily Tull

Textile artist (embroidery)

