


Recording of the week: Sparkie Williams the talking budgerigar

This week's selection comes from Cheryl Tipp, Curator of Wildlife and Environmental Sounds.

Sparkie Williams was a prize-winning talking budgerigar, renowned for his impressive vocabulary of over 500 words, sayings and rhymes. In 1958 he was crowned top bird in the BBC's International Cage Word Contest which turned him into an overnight star. His success led him to be the face (or should that be beak?) of an ad campaign for leading bird seed producer Capern and so impressed Parlophone that they offered him a record deal.

His owner, Mrs Mattie Williams, employed an almost military approach to Sparkie's oral development, dedicating several hours a day to teaching her beloved budgie to speak. Her Geordie accent can clearly be heard in Sparkie's delivery of the rhyme at the end of this [recording](#).

[Excerpts from Philip Marsden introduces Sparkie Williams_Parlophone 1958](#)

 Sparkie Williams (courtesy of the Great North Museum: Hancock)

After his death in 1962, Sparkie was stuffed and donated to the [Great North Museum: Hancock](#) in Newcastle where he is currently on display.

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