

# CDSS Sings: The Bluebird Songs of Summer

by Lorraine Lee Hammond

One great strength of CDSS is that we members are willing and driven to get out there and play, sing, and dance. We constantly interact with real human beings in a world sometimes disturbingly driven by technology and vicarious engagement. Yes, we may feel foolish on occasion, forgetting a bit of lyric, or a dance step, but oh we do have fun! And in time we build meaningful communities through shared dance, song, and tune sessions, and the pot luck dinners that flow seamlessly into the mix. We include our elders and our children in all this merry-making, drawing from and renewing repertoires from many cultural traditions.

Music connects all domains of learning. It is not by chance that we teach the alphabet with a song. The musical engagement we love fosters imagination and coordination, memory and cooperation. Those of us lucky enough to have begun with playground and backyard children's games had a head start in many ways. My own childhood was rich with rhymes, playground games, and what seemed the inevitable Virginia Reel sessions in the elementary school gym/auditorium.

As for the bluebirds in the title here, we children played "Bluebird, Bluebird, In My Window." For decades I have sung the Marvin Rainwater country classic, "Gonna Find Me a Bluebird." The 1941 Kent and Burton song, "(There'll Be Bluebirds Over) The White Cliffs of Dover" was a favorite of my parent's generation, and a small glass "bluebird of happiness" graced my mother's kitchen windowsill.

The song here, "There Stands a Bluebird" is new for me. It is a treasure I happened upon while researching the life of Zora Neale Hurston. I was reading her powerful novel, "Their Eyes Were Watching God," and I wanted to learn about the life of this extraordinary woman. That interest led me to this song now archived in the [American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress](#). In addition to over two hundred discs of African American, Haitian, and Bahamian songs that she, Mary Barnicle, and Alan Lomax collected in 1935, there is a single disc of three songs that Zora Neale Hurston, cultural anthropologist, collected independently in Haiti in 1936, while studying local religious practices and zombies. One of the three



songs on that disc is this little gem of a children's song and game. You can hear Zora herself sing ["There Stands a Bluebird" on YouTube](#).

The song is lovely as a lullaby, and also as a ring/circle game. It is on the [Cultural Equity website](#), a superb resource for the massive Lomax collections and Global Jukebox. There are directions for how to play the game [here](#). The more familiar "Bluebird, Bluebird, Fly Through My Window" is also on the recording.

Click to [download the notation](#) for "There Stands a Bluebird."

I wish you a playful and music filled summer!

*A former CDSS board member, Lorraine Lee Hammond introduced both "CDSS Sings" and "Song of the Month" to CDSS during her time on the board. Lorraine has numerous credits as a traditional singer, songwriter, teacher and instrumentalist. She performs and records extensively with her husband, guitar virtuoso Bennett Hammond, and is a lecturer in American Folk Music at Lasell College in Newton, MA. Lorraine is Music Director for the WUMB/fm Summer Acoustic Music Week and Weekend programs.*