



Turning to the fine details and character

It has been lovely to see some of your birds taking shape! Such a wonderfully talented group.

Don't worry if you feel you haven't caught up. I'm in the same boat! The main thing is to enjoy the process, and treasure those precious moments when you can spare some minutes to put in a few stitches.

This section will be a bit smaller than the last. I'm trying to plan it (possibly not successfully) that we all attempt long and short shading at the same time.

I know I'm starting to sound like a broken record on this one, but don't forget to tighten your frame or hoop before stitching!

The bluebirders will be stitching the head, shoulder and small section between the shoulder and breast. The robiners will move onto the breast (out of order from the instructions, but it will mean we are all attempting long and short shading at the same time). The blackbirders will move onto the large black laidwork area.

Stitches used

Satin Stitch

More practice of satin stitch for our bluebirders, and the first time for our robiners.



The bluebird section is quite small and fiddly. Hopefully after the practice on the larger areas of satin stitch you are a bit more comfortable now stitching it.

The main thing to remember is your needle angle. I know Nicola suggests in this small area to not put in the split stitch line. I personally will put in the split stitch line. I find I can't get a neat edge without it. If you follow Nicola's suggestion, try to take your needle straight up and down just over the design line.

For the robiners, it will be your first time of working satin stitch on your bird.

Remember to stitch a small and tight split stitch line first, and to angle your needle under your split stitch line and towards the previous stitch. This helps to create the rolling motion for the thread which gives a crisp edge finish.

The area to cover on the robin in satin stitch is reasonably large for satin stitch. This doesn't seem to be a problem, just be careful of your tension and keeping it even throughout.

Padded satin stitch

This is for the bluebirders.

I'm not sure if Nicola is referring to padded satin stitch as the stitch to use for this. I'm suspecting not, as she doesn't specifically say that.

However, I believe the area is large enough to fit padded satin stitch into the eye.



The key to padded satin stitch is to lay the padding stitches within the split stitch line, and at a perpendicular angle to the top layer.

In the eye we would only use one layer, however with larger, more padded shapes, you may like to use multiple layers. In this case, you would start with smaller laid work stitches, and working at perpendicular angles each time, build up your layers. The final layer always goes over the split stitch line, as a satin stitch. So if you are working multiple layers, remember to think about the direction you want your top layer to be in, and work backwards until you get to the direction your stitches need to be in on your first layer.

Seeding stitch

Last time the Robin had the seeding, this time it's the bluebird!

The idea is to give the look of randomness, but the stitches need to be the same length. For some reason I find this a difficult balance to achieve!

I read somewhere once that you should try and stitch the stitches at right angles to each other. I find this works surprisingly well. And by varying just slightly the distance between the stitches you can get a nice effect.

It's up to you how densely you wish to the stitch seeded areas. The more stitches you add, the more coloured it will look. In both the blue and green areas, on Nicola's version they are



quite heavily seeded. If you aren't sure of the effect you would like, you can always start with less stitches and add in more.

Also, the smaller the stitches, the more densely filled the area will appear. When I use this stitch I tend to use stitches that are about 2-4 mm long.

When working with the Appeltons, I found it particularly difficult as the width of the thread in my skein changed so regularly. You will get a better result if the wool is the same width. You can usually cut the thread around either the very fat or very thin sections of the Appeltons.

Decorative split stitch

Again, last week it was the robin's time to do decorative split stitch, now it's the bluebird's turn!

When doing a decorative split stitch, you may like to keep your stitch marginally longer than when using the stitch functionally before satin stitch or long and short shading. Around 3-4mm is a nice length. Use a short length to ensure you don't wear the thread and snap it.

Laid work

This stitch looks a lot like satin stitch, except all the thread is kept on the front of the piece. It is useful for covering wide areas, as you won't have the fabric gather with all the thread.

Some colours will be easier to get to look 'right' than others. This is all to do with the reflection of light. The bluebird and

robin should be reasonably ok. The blackbird might get a little tricky as it's all in black. Don't let your eyes fool you - if you are certain you have followed the grain of the fabric, and don't have any fabric showing through, it will be fine once finished.

Things to remember with laid work

- Traditionally, a split stitch line isn't used, however Nicola does recommend it, and it will help to give a crisp edge. I was pleasantly surprised that you can 'break' that rule, as my edges with laid work tend to be very messy!
- When bringing your needle up and taking it down, bring it straight up and take it straight down to maximise your chances of a smooth edge.
- Particularly on the Robin, keeping the stitches straight is important to the final result. Hopefully you will be able to follow the grain of your linen easily to achieve this.
- You may find it easier to lay the thread on the fabric, and when you are happy with where the thread is laying, stitch through the wool. This tip also works when doing trellis. Remember to keep the thread reasonably tight when laying it on the fabric so it resembles a stitched thread, and take your needle down through the thread just to the outside of the design line.

Trellis stitch

Trellis stitch can be used as it is in Nicola's pieces, or it can be used alone, with the fabric showing through.

I was originally told that trellis stitch should form squares, rather than diamonds when stitched. However, I'm not sure how



accurate that is, as I see a lot of diamonds in other pieces being created!

The first step is to determine the angle of your trellis stitch. You can use the pictures of your bird you have to get an idea of the angle, but also lay the thread over your work or fabric until you are happy with the angle achieved. This first stitch will determine the angle of all your other stitches.

The hardest part with trellis stitch is to get the stitches evenly spaced. There are a few tricks I have heard on working a way around this: marking one of your fingers, using a piece of paper, using a measuring tape, and if you have particularly good judgement, just using your eyes! I tend to use a tape measure, but in essence, they are all the same, it is just working out which one you will find easiest.

Once you are happy with the position of your thread you have laid on top, like with the laidwork tip, hold the thread in place, and then stitch through the thread. I was dubious at first on if this would work, but it does work very well!

The spacing of your trellis is very much a personal choice. I tend to leave a space of about 5mm, but if you like the look of them when they are a bit larger, that is completely up to you.

Also like laid work, the majority of the thread lays on the top of the fabric. So you will come up next to where you took needle down on the previous stitch.

Once you have all your trellis stitched in the first direction, it's time to stitch it in the other. The first stitch is again important,



as it will determine the placement of the remainder of your stitches.

With both of these first stitches, you may prefer to start in the middle of the shape - it's easier to judge things from the centre rather than the edge.

The final step in the process after you have stitched in all your trellis stitches is to secure them. Using small stitches, stitch over each intersection. You want to make your holding stitches small, but not so small that they pull the trellis out of shape. It is a difficult balance, and you may need to attempt it a couple of times. In most cases, stitches of about 3mm will work, but you may find you need them a little longer.

Also with these holding stitches, keep them all in the same direction. Again, it is a personal preference of which direction you choose. The main point is to keep them all the same.

French Knots

Last time the bluebirders worked French knots with multiple strands. The robin is a little easier - it uses one strand and a cluster of them!

You may find my [video](#) on French Knots useful where I go through in more detail how to do them.



I am really enjoying seeing your birds progress, so please continue to share and don't be scared to join in!

If you aren't comfortable sharing in the group, feel free to email me and I will get back to you that way.

A tip from our Facebook group this week is about the clarity of the pictures in the kit. After noting the poor quality of the kit images, Nicola jumped onto Nicola Jarvis' website, and found some very clear images there. Thank you Nicola for sharing this great tip!

Enjoy, and happy stitching! As always, if you have any questions, please let me know.

Catherine