

Ella Mae

Greg Brown

Ella Mae - the redwings returned today
A little rain fell in the morning
The afternoon was clear
An' that song you loved to hear
Was filling up the fence row where the birds all go
To talk over their long journey and sing.

Ella Mae - all the gifts you gave
Tremble in my life like a startled deer
You gave me my Pa
Who is in me as you are
And the southern piney hills
The clear water and the running rills
That tumbled through the lives of us all.

Six big men and one big strong woman
You and little Granpa David raised up there
They all had families
We all come back to see you
You hugged us all in turn
Cocked you head and said we'd grown
And touched us with your hands
That smelled like bread

Ella Mae - it's a clear warm summer's day
The young birds are trying out their wings
Ah it's something to see them try
To get up there and fly
And my own child is bound to do the same
Today she learned three birds' names.

Ella Mae - I can see you plain as day
Sailing out like a ship to your garden
In your old wide-brim straw hat
With a long handled hoe in your hand.
pausing at the gate I see you look south to the pond
A long time quiet smile on your face.

Ella Mae - when your David went away
After cutting brush all day long
Well, your life just slowly closed
Like a worn out autumn rose
You could not find the bread
You could not make your lonesome bed
Or really do a thing but rise and go.

Ella Mae - the redwings left today
Passing in a long cloud of wings
They're headed down your way
They'll be there in a couple of days
They'll sing that song you loved
As they fly above
Your resting place by David in the pines.