Wildlife Sound

The Journal of the Wildlife Sound Recording Society

BBC Natural History Unit

"Close Up" Recording

Recording Dolphins

Baltic Expedition

Volume 12 No 4 Autumn 2012

Contents

Front Cover: Corncrake on Islay by Robert Malpas

Wildlife Sound Recording Society

Wildlife Sound Recording Society (WSRS) was formed in 1968.
The Society is based in the United Kingdom, but membership is spread throughout the world.

"The objects of the Society shall be to encourage the enjoyment, recording and understanding of wildlife and other natural sounds. This will be achieved by circulating a sound magazine and a printed journal, by instigating and supporting projects which aim at furthering the science of bioacoustics, by developing the techniques of recording natural sounds and by any other means."

WSRS holds an AGM & Members' Day each year, as well as regular local and field meetings at suitable venues, and also runs an annual sound recording competition.

Officers for 2012

President	Richard Ranft British Library Sound Archive, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB Tel: 020 7412 7402 Email: richard.ranft@bl.uk
Chairman / Webmaster	Alan Burbidge 30, Wilsthorpe Road, Breaston, Derby DE72 3EB Tel: 01332 870184 Email: chairman@wildlife-sound.org
Vice Chairman	Ian Brady 25 Church Street, Newchurch, Rossendale, Lancs, BB4 9EX Tel: 01706 222120 Email: vice.chairman@wildlife-sound.org
Hon Secretary	Paul Pratley 2 Broadway View, Deymans Hill, Tiverton, Devon EX16 4LJ Tel: 01884 258193 Email: secretary@wildlife-sound.org
Hon Treasurer / Hon Sales Officer	Robert Malpas Church Cottage, York Road, Escrick, York YO19 6EX Tel: 01904 728462 Email: treasurer@wildlife-sound.org
Hon Sound Magazine Editor	John H Paterson Cranbourne Farm House, Sutton Scotney, Winchester, Hampshire, SO21 3QD Tel: 01962 760484 Email: sound-magazine.editor@wildlife-sound.org
Hon Journal Editor	Andy Freeth 33, Argus Close, Sutton Coldfield West Midlands, B76 2TG. Tel: 0121 313 3312 Email: journal.editor@wildlife-sound.org
Hon Membership Secretary	David Mellor Fuschia Cottage, Main Street, Helperthorpe, nr Malton, North Yorkshire YO17 8TQ Tel: 01944 738424 Email: membership@wildlife-sound.org
Officer without Portfolio	Ian Todd 11 Fydell Court, Boston, Lincolnshire, PE21 8QB Tel: 01205 352189 Email: ianchristophertodd@yahoo.com
Officer without Portfolio	Nick Davison 79 Carnglas Road, Tycock, Swansea, SA2 9BL. Tel: 07944 767343 Email: nick@gowerphotography.co.uk

Editorial

Andy Freeth

Well another six months has passed since my last editorial column and we've just had our week of summer sun at the beginning of September..better late than never I suppose! The adverse climatic conditions have certainly played their part in scuppering many members' plans for recording this year, me included, but I trust that you have managed to get capture some good sounds.

Several members prepared for the potentially wet and windy conditions on the Scottish island of Islay this May. Fortunately, lady luck was on their side, bringing a week without rain, though I understand that a lot of the recordings were made at night to avoid the wind!

John Burton provides us with an in depth look back at the Wildlife Sound Library at the BBC Natural History Unit. It's amazing how far recording gear has developed over the years, making the pursuit available and relatively affordable to the general public. Think of the pioneers of location sound recording. They captured many of the sounds we hear in present day wildlife documentaries, using often cumbersome and heavy equipment. It will make one think twice about complaining at the weight of a compact flash recorder again!

David Moon enjoyed a Wildeye course on the Baltic coast of Sweden, with the participants employing an assortment of open mics and hydrophones to capture the habitats presented to them. It just goes to show that there isn't a right or wrong equipment rig to use in a particular scenario, as there seemed to be as many different set-ups as there were recordists.

Phil Rudkin explains the methods he uses for identifying the differences in calls between Willow and Marsh Tits, as well as Great and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers. Useful advice for us all here.

Nick Davison, our newly appointed OWP, reviews a British Library CD entitled "*Wild London"*, which was published in June of this year.

Nick has been doing some very valuable work in forging links with the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, so that the Society may raise its profile with the public at WWT reserves. This is a most worthwhile collaboration that may benefit members who wish to record on WWT sites in the future.

We also welcome John Paterson onto the committee, who is talking over as the Sound Editor. Please make his job easier by continuing to send your recordings to him.

Dr Caroline Weir has contributed a scientific article on the vocalizations of the Atlantic Humpback Dolphin, which she was studying in Angola.

For those of you who attended the AGM and members' day back in July, you will have heard the winning entries in the annual society recording competition.

The results of the 2011 Society Competition are included in this edition, together with some images of the prize presentations. Many thanks to Nick Dando and Phil Rudkin for doing their "David Bailey" bit at the AGM again. It's good to capture the wildlife recordist in its natural habitat (chatting to other members!)

I trust that those of you who attended the Society Workshop in September had a good time and made some new friends and contacts. The society maintains its aim to promote bio-acoustics and scientific research, but recognises that many of you have joined the WSRS because you ***enjoy*** the activity of hearing and recording birdsong.

We will endeavour to encourage the "newbie" by offering help at workshops and field meetings, but we can only achieve this if you attend them. Take a look at the planned events for next year and come along!

Some of you may have heard the sad news that Jeffery Boswall had passed away in August. Jeffery was a very well known naturalist and broadcaster, working with the BBC and RSPB. Importantly, he was a co-founder of the British Library Sound Archive. Chris Watson writes an obituary for us.

Sadly I have to announce the passing of another member, Dennis Pickering. Our condolences to his family at this time.

Finally, I trust that 2013 will be an excellent recording year for you all, whether you're on your home patch, on holiday or joining us at a WSRS field meeting.

All best wishes

Andy

From the Chairman

Alan Burbidge

I would like to emphasise what I said in my introduction to the AGM and Members' Day about the level of support that so many members give freely to WSRS. I failed then and I will probably fail now to include everyone, so I'm going to try to avoid names(!), but I think it is crucial that those who do so generously give their time to the society should be recognised and thanked. The officers whether they crave it or not do inevitably get in the limelight. Without them the Society wouldn't function, however, it wouldn't function as well as it does nor be the welcoming society that it is without the many 'unsung heroes' doing their bit in the background.

The Journal wouldn't be the professional, well-rounded publication it is without its regular contributors, new members would have a fairly clinical welcome to the society if it were not for the regional contacts who phone up new members to make sure they have everything they need and try to answer any queries they might not want to ask via a more formal route. The web-site has several volunteers looking after various aspects including the forum, Facebook and where would the blog page be without its regular contributors. Then there are the competition organisers and the judges, the volunteer who prepare the aural version of the Journal for our visually impaired members plus the support team for the Sound Magazine.

Then there are those who generously give their time to organise local meetings and those who acquiesce to requests from me for articles and items for the web. As you see , the list goes on. As mentioned, I risk omitting people (for which please accept my apologies in advance!), I hope that I haven't but if I have please tell me. What I will say is that everyone's contribution is very much valued, very welcome and the society will continue to rely on its network of volunteers to continue to make WSRS a thriving, active society. Thankyou!!

As I write this report, the AGM and Members' Day is still relatively fresh in my mind. I think it was a really good event, there was a buzz of enthusiasm throughout the meeting and much going on. In particular our speaker Jez Riley-French gave a terrific talk opening up (to me at least) a whole new world of sound using contact mics, pick-ups and hydrophones.

There was much activity around his sales table after his talk, so I expect many members will soon be experimenting with hydrophones and contact mics!! His relatively under-represented world of sound made me think about how WSRS has been developing over the years.

The fact that his talk was welcomed with open arms by the audience suggests that WSRS members are outward looking and keen to investigate new techniques, approaches and subjects. This in turn made me reflect on some talk from a few years ago that WSRS was introspective and backward looking. I am confident that neither of these criticisms can now be levelled at us, however, I have been looking back.....

A couple of years ago I scanned all of the past issues of Wildlife Sound and uploaded them to the Members' Area of the web-site as a resource for members only.

I realised at the time that just having the journals in electronic form wasn't ideal: unless you knew what you were looking for, it was hit and miss whether you found any articles relevant to your needs. So I spent some time digitalising the contents pages of each and every issue of Wildlife Sound. In addition, I have categorised the articles in the Journal into topics such as 'Recording Locations and Travel', 'Recording Techniques and Equipment Reviews'. So it is now possible to search the entire set of contents pages for articles on these key phrases as well as any other word that might be relevant.

I can't guarantee that you will find what you need, but simply by scanning through the contents pages, I found all sorts of articles which I had once read but which still have much information that is relevant today. Equipment may have changed, but techniques from 30 years ago will still have uses today and even in our increasingly noisy world, some of the locations featured in the Journal may well still be excellent recording venues. We have a terrific heritage in the journal archive and the articles recorded there can inform and help shape recording projects of the future. I hope that you are able to make use of the archive and find that the ability to search it will be of value to you.

Finally some hellos and goodbyes...
I'm sure you will all join me in thanking our outgoing Sound Magazine Editor Geoff Sample for sterling work over the last few years and for bringing a fresh perspective to the Sound Magazine. I think Geoff has done an excellent job for WSRS - thankyou.

.... and a very warm welcome to our new officers elected at the AGM:
John Paterson who picks up the reins as our Sound Magazine Editor and who brings his not-inconsiderable experience as a wildlife sound recordist to the role, and Nick Davison our new Officer without Portfolio who is already getting stuck into the role and is forging ahead developing a number of important new links for us.

Happy Recording!!

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Introducing your new Sound Magazine Editor John Paterson

Everyone will be sorry to know that Geoff Sample is retiring as editor of the Sound Magazine. He has done a splendid job, and we are privileged to have had his profound knowledge and expertise behind the production of the SM for the last few years. We owe him a big thank-you, and wish him well in the development of his business.

I am the new boy in the job. Unlike my predecessors, I can claim no more than amateur status as qualification, though I have a fair amount of field experience. I joined the WSRS twenty three years ago. One of my particular interests has been the collection of recordings from less familiar habitats. This has taken me to some fascinating places, though not always with the anticipated rewards, as experienced wildlife recordists will appreciate.

It is not only some of the sounds which I have been lucky enough to capture which have made this hobby so rewarding. It has also been the memories, the sights, the people, and the associated experiences. It is hard to describe the emotions which I experienced on coming across a bird, high up in the Andes of Ecuador, which had been totally unknown until only a very few years ago. All of a sudden, in that desolate, mysterious spot, as patches of cold mist passed, alternately closing or opening the magnificent vista of near-vertical landscape, there it was.

I was alone in the mountains, face to face with a bird from pre-history. I would have preferred to come away from there with a recording to send a chill up the spine, but I didn't. I have a recording of sorts. But that mediocre recording triggers my memory of a very special moment.

I will be dependent on you, the members, to keep me supplied with recordings from which the rest of us can learn. If it was a good recording, we want to hear it, and we want to know how you did it. If it was a disappointing recording, we want to know about the circumstances so that we shall be better equipped to improve our chances of success. If it is a recording, whether technically good or not, which has special significance for you, please let us hear about that too.

All contributions will be welcome, in whatever format suits you. If I cannot deal with the format myself, I probably know someone who will help me, and I am most grateful for the offers of help in many forms which I have received.

If you are in a position to choose a format, CD is easiest for me. Please send them to me, John Paterson, Cranbourne Farm House, Sutton Scotney, Winchester, Hants., SO21 3QD.

Web Officer's Report

Alan Burbidge

I'm sure that I have either alluded to or reported on most of the recent web-site developments already in previous articles and reports. However, I thought it might be useful to summarise what I presented at the AGM so that the whole membership is aware of how the web-site is being developed.

The web-site has become the main route through which new members join us and although we still get many 'referrals' from existing members, the majority of new members find us through the web. So it is important that the site looks professional and is enticing; it is becoming our shop-window.

Much effort has been put into making the public-facing part of our web-site comprehensive. This is no doubt of interest to members but its primary focus is to publicise the society and attract new members. I said in my AGM Officer's report that I would like to turn attention onto the Members' area to increase the benefit members derive from it.

Within the last year a **Sound Magazine Forum** has been made live in the Members' area to enable members to interactively comment on articles in the Sound Magazine.

Very shortly (if not already) a fully revised booklet ***'Introduction to Wildlife Sound Recording'*** will be uploaded and a **Loan Kit Page** is being constructed which will allow members to hire recording kit from the Society to try out new recording rigs.

I am also soliciting articles from members on how they record so that in conjunction with this Journal there will be articles entitled ***'Featured Recordist'*** which demonstrate different approaches and recording techniques, linked to sounds and in some cases videos on the Members' area of the web-site.

Finally, as described in my Chairman's report, a **Searchable Index** of the entire archive of Wildlife Sound is now available to make finding articles from back issues of the Journal easier. If there are services or features which you feel would add value to the membership and which are lacking on the Members' Area of the web-site, I would be delighted to hear from you.

In addition, on the public-facing page we have an **Introductory video/voice-over** to give an overview of the society, we have a new series of ***"Sound of the Month"*** (thanks to Simon Elliott), some '**Diabolically Difficult Quizzes**' were uploaded several months ago, we have a new **Sales Page** to allow us to sell CDs and other productions from WSRS and we have a **Site Search** button to allow easy interrogation of the web-site allowing anyone to easily find the information they seek.

Finally, we are on **Facebook** and have a good following of over 280 people so far. To keep the web-site fresh there are plans to revise the front page format and move round the display items of our shop window.

I hope you agree that the web-site gives us a very professional image to display to the world and that it is a useful resource for WSRS members and an important passive promotional tool for the Society.
Happy browsing!!

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Todd's Autumnal Sermon

Ian Todd OWP-1

Already I detect an autumnal feeling in the air, but I'm striving not to be too pessimistic, and I keep hoping that this feeling relates merely to the year 2012, and not to the forty-four year old WSRS.

So why, you may ruminate, my dark thoughts? Maybe I need more tablets? Well, I'll try to be serious for a change and review the recent WSRS calendar, and the level of support that it received. You might then soon see why I'm in need of tablets.

Let's start with our Islay Spring Meeting, fully attended, with nine of us present for a whole week! This was quite an innovation. Full house! However, when one learns that this number represented the full capacity of the accommodation available to us, and that of these nine members, five were members of the committee, the gloss of complacency does tend to cloud a little. Would you not agree?

Similarly, our AGM attendance figures might also give rise to concern. We had a total attendance of forty at the Members' Day / AGM in July 2010, and the same in July 2011. This year the figure was thirty-one. Is this not worrying?

The officers realise and accept that the nature of WSRS and of society in general has changed with the emergence, power, and convenience of the internet, and they have invested in our web-site so as to adapt to this changed and enhanced communication.

For instance, Secretary Paul has this year developed an online Sound Magazine Comments page on the WSRS web-site, intended to complement the Journal feature as hosted by Jenny Beasley for many years.

Use of this comments page should facilitate much more interaction and spontaneity. It would be nice to see more members commenting, by either method. After all, is not peer-review intended to be core feature of WSRS? In fact, it would be reassuring to see greater use of the web-site in general. We have gained many members via this of late. Please use it. You're paying for it! It's the way forward.

Well, what's on the WSRS agenda for the next year? Might we see more support? May we proceed with optimism? By the time you read this we'll have had a Recording and Sound-Processing Workshop Weekend at the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick, Derbyshire, on the Saturday and Sunday of 15th and 16th of September.

Then there was the East Anglia Local Meeting at Wicken Fen NT Reserve, Cambridgeshire on Saturday 22nd September. I wonder how well were these events attended? If I'm still alive as you read, I'll no doubt know.

And so, what of the imminent future? Paul will be publishing particulars of the Winter and Spring Meetings 2012 / 2013 -- watch out for these. Furthermore, we have already booked a venue for the 2013 Members' Day / AGM, scheduled for Saturday 6th July 2013. In accord with our policy of varying the AGM location, this is to be held at Wendlebury Village Hall, in Oxfordshire.

Oh, and quite apart from my usual carping, what have I been doing this year? Well, believe it or no, I've been spending much time travelling and getting out in the field with my MS rig and solid-state recorder.

I've been powering-up and sound-recording in England, France, Spain, Portugal, and Scotland, so far.

Perhaps this is what WSRS is about, and all I need now is to find the time to process my material. The usual bottleneck. Also, I've revisited and re-mastered the Skokholm Soundscapes CD compilation, which I put together many years ago from members' recordings --- including my own --- made on Skokholm Island in May 1998. The improved version is now with BLSA, and WSRS have plans to publicise it further.

Oh well, if you've read this far, you'll no doubt have had enough, so it's goodbye from me, until my next outburst.

Ian

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Introducing Nick Davison OWP-2

As a new member to the Officer's Committee, I thought it would be wise to introduce myself to the wider membership, as not all of you attended the AGM this year, when I was elected an Officer without Portfolio.

The natural world has always played a part in my life, from pond dipping as a child to visiting Yosemite National Park in California as a twenty year old to follow in the footsteps of the American Photographer, Ansel Adams. Admittedly it dimmed a bit when I lived in London for 13 years; however, I remained a member of a few wildlife charities and continue to support them today, with a few new ones as well.

I came to wildlife sound recording in a bit of a roundabout way. The introduction of video into Digital SLR cameras had started to increase demand for video work from my commercial photography clients and as most of you already know, sound is 50% of video. As I work mainly in the outdoor environment for my photography, specialising in adventure sports, travel, nature, landscape and environmental subjects, I thought I had better get some training in sound recording.

I attended the Wildeye courses where Chris Watson, one of our fellow WSRS members, generously shared his knowledge and put up with my questions. Armed with this new found knowledge and my usual tendency to run before I could walk, I was soon to be found recording the sounds of the Gower Peninsula and Swansea, where I live.

I still feel that I am at the start of my wildlife sound recording journey and am currently experimenting with different set ups to find the one that appeals to me. Knowing me though, I will probably continue to use them all and be a jack of all trades and master of none!

I was approached by both Roger, the outgoing Chairman and Alan our current chairman at the 2011 AGM, to see if I would be willing to get involved with the running of the society. For a while the officers of the society have been concerned about membership retention, the needs of new members and beginners to sound recording.

They were also trying to combat the appearance, however inaccurate, that the society was possibly run for a select clique of members.

As I ticked most of the boxes listed above; new member and new to sound recording, I was asked to attend Officer's meetings to see if I felt willing to get involved with the society more than your average member.

For the last year or so I have been attending the Officer's meetings and have been giving feedback and suggesting ideas to the committee. I'm pleased to say that some of my comments and suggestions have been acted upon already.

The Wildlife Sound Recording Society is relatively unknown to the wider world at a time when wildlife sound is becoming ever more widely publicised. Chris Watson and other wildlife sound features appear regularly on programs such as Spring and Autumn watch, plus broadcasts on Radio 4.

Books with bird identification CD's are becoming more wide spread, especially the Sound Approach publications that were set up especially to promote bird sounds and the British Library continues to produce regular wildlife sound based CD publications, the society co-production of the CD "Wild World" with the library being a recent example.

One of my suggestions was to improve the links between the society and other organisations and charities that are concerned with wildlife protection/promotion. Hopefully this would result in benefits for all organisations involved and promote our society and its aims to a wider audience.

I have been given the task of taking this suggestion forward and as a result I have started contacting a few organisations after attending London Wild Bird Watch earlier this year to see whether the society should be getting involved with this type of event.

As a result of these enquiries the society has been asked to be involved in a collaborative project with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, hopefully details of which are in this edition of the journal, your recent newsletter and on the forum on the web-site.

To the newer members of the society or those beginning the adventure of wildlife sound recording, I extend the offer of help with their membership or issues with their new pastime. As a new member and recordist myself, I'm sure I will have come across the same issues at some point. I don't claim to be an expert in anything, but I am more than willing to help or put you in contact with other members in the society who are.

To the other more established members of the society I encourage you to take part in as many activities that the society organises that you can and to send feedback and ideas to the officers as often as possible. There is a silent majority of members in the society and the Officer's committee is keen to have them become a bit more vocal and involved in the society. Without feedback from the membership, the Officer's have to guess what members want. Hopefully we get close most of the time, but it would be nice to know how we are doing!

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WSRS Data Protection Policy

Alan Burbidge

Data Protection legislation in the UK places responsibility on individuals to safeguard information they receive about others. The Wildlife Sound Recording Society takes Data Protection very seriously.

The officers are aware of one instance of possible misuse of one member's information and in that instance the trail has been followed back to the person breaching the legislation.

As a society whose membership is dispersed across the world, our recordists rely heavily on having access to other members' contact details to enable sharing of experiences and for arranging field meetings, for example.

The following is our policy:

- Contact details are stored in a secure electronic database and are used by the society to keep its members informed of society activities

- A List of Members (LoM) contact details is updated every few years and distributed to members only. This LoM is to be used solely for the purpose of making contact with other WSRS members for WSRS-related activities.

- On joining, new members are asked whether they are willing for their contact details to be published in the LoM.

- Updates of Members' contact details are distributed to members from time to time by the Newsletter which is sent only to members.

Formerly, these updates were produced in the Journal '*Wildlife Sound*', but this practice changed with the advent of the Data Protection Act as the Journal is distributed outside the membership.

- Before any new LoM is produced, all current members are formally asked by letter whether they wish to opt out of having their contact details included in the LoM.

It is a requirement of membership that members do nothing that conflicts with this policy both for legal reasons and to ensure that members can continue to maximise the benefit they receive from WSRS membership.

Secretary's Report

Paul Pratley

As I write this I sit at the dining table in our self-catering cottage, overlooking Hugh Town harbour on the Isles of Scilly, a damp scene at the moment as the rain comes down. The archipelago sitting some twenty mile off the Cornish coast in the south west England has an environment that is subtropical with palm trees, *Echiums*, *Agapanthus* and many other plants from warmer climes, not able to survive else where in the Britain.

The islands offer quite a challenge for the recordist, wind being the main one, the constant roar of the sea, and the small planes bringing visitors to the islands seem to be a continual background noise, but when you do find a quiet moment there are some interesting subjects to record, including a interesting selection of bush crickets and cone-heads. The local wrens and great tits have their own songs, quite different to their mainland counter parts. The local swallow roost is a challenge, two days ago it was three hundred birds, last night it was just two individuals, you can guess which night I went out to record them!

2012 spring and summer has not been a good time for recording or for the wildlife here in Britain, rain seems to have been the order of the day. Heavy rains raised river levels in early May wiping out most of the kingfisher and mute swan nests along the whole length of the River Exe in Devon, unfortunately this must have been repeated on many rivers around the country. Hopefully there has been enough time for the kingfishers to try and raise another brood, but for the mute swans it was their one and only chance of breeding for the year. Let's hope next year is better.

One bright spot was the WSRS field meeting in May on Islay, when nine members arrived on the island the sun came out and the rain stopped for the week. A good time was had by all, with a wealth of subjects and locations to record. I managed to record several species I have difficulty seeing let alone recording in Devon including; lapwing, snipe, common gull and Arctic terns. We must thank James How, the RSPB warden at Loch Gruinart, for all his help and assistance in making the week a successful field trip.

I have had comments from members that they don't know why they continue recording, they have no goals any more. I am hoping that a new project that I am proposing, will give some added motivation for new and experienced recordists alike.

I am in the process of working up project guidelines, to hopefully ensure that members will know its purpose and its objectives. I hope that the project will be ongoing and will enable members to use their skills for many years to come to record our ever changing environment. I will tell you more towards the end of the year, when I have a clearer idea, what and how we are going to implement the project. Sorry to be vague at this stage but I want to get it right, or at least as right as I can.

We have new opportunities appearing on the horizon, the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust are interested in working with our society to promote the sounds of nature to their members and to the public. This is an ideal opportunity for people to listen to nature, in a way that they do not normally have.

I am amazed how few people bother to listen to their surroundings. I work with several keen walkers, who think nothing of walking 10 – 15 miles, sometimes more, in a day, when I ask them what did you see, they look at me blankly and reply "I went for a walk, I saw some views".

They don't look at the flowers, the insects, or the birds around them, but they consider themselves country people, because they go for a walk in the country, but they pay no attention to what is around them.

Working with the WWT will give us the opportunity to add another dimension to their lives, the sounds of nature. Please support Nick in his work with WWT, he has worked hard to start up a dialogue and to keep the momentum going, we don't want to lose this opportunity and lose face with an organisation like WWT.

In this day and age we need to work with other conservation organisations the environment needs as many friends as it can get.

Paul

Meet the Officers!

Ian Brady Vice Chairman

Robert Malpas Treasurer

David Mellor Membership Secretary

ABSTRACTS

Interesting articles from recent bioacoustics literature

Compiled by Simon Elliott

Tuning and fading voices in songbirds: age-dependent changes in two acoustic traits across the life span
Rivera-Gutierrez HF, Pinxten R, Eens M
Animal Behaviour 83(5):1279-1283. 2012

Well, it happens to us all, and apparently to birds as well. As these authors state: "senescence is associated with loss of function and physiological deterioration". They recorded the songs of wild Great tits *Parus major* over a 4-year period, focussing on two previously identified acoustic, sexually selected signals: song consistency and repertoire size. Repertoire size did not vary with age, but song consistency reduced. Their results suggest that, similarly to speech in humans, different aspects of birdsong are differentially affected by age: motor performance traits deteriorate with age, but language skills may not be affected during the life span.

Great tits in urban noise benefit from high frequencies in song detection and discrimination
Pohl NU, Leadbeater E et al.,
Animal Behaviour, Volume 83(3):711-721.2012

Yet another paper outlining the effects of urban living on birds and birdsong. This time, evidence that great tits showed different patterns of discrimination in urban compared to woodland noise conditions. Features concerning the high-frequency elements of the songs were used in urban noise, while the birds used more features of the whole songs to solve the discrimination task in woodland noise.

Auditory defence in the peacock butterfly (Inachis io) against mice (Apodemus flavicollis and (A. sylvaticus).
Olofsson M, Jakobsson S, Wiklund C
Behav. Ecol. Sociobiol. 66(2):209-215. 2012

Many members will have heard the hissing and clicking sounds made by a disturbed Peacock butterfly. These are both sonic and ultrasonic and are accompanied by wing-flicking to display the four large eyespots. Peacocks hibernate as adults in dark wintering sites and employ their secondary defence upon encounter with small rodent predators during this period.

These researchers staged predator–prey encounters in complete darkness in the laboratory between wild mice and peacocks which had their sound production intact or disabled, and showed that mice were more likely to flee from sound-producing butterflies than from butterflies which had their sound production disabled. This provides experimental evidence that the peacock butterfly employs a multimodal defence with different traits targeting different predator groups; the eyespots target birds and the sound production targets small rodent predators.

Fooling the experts: accurate vocal mimicry in the song of the superb lyrebird, Menura novaehollandiae
Dalziell AH, Magrath RD
Animal Behaviour 83(6):1401-1410. 2012

Superb lyrebirds can accurately imitate an astonishing variety of sounds that they incorporate into their displays. These researchers assessed the accuracy with which males imitate the complex song of the grey shrike-thrush *Colluricincla harmonica*. Acoustic analyses showed that imitations were remarkably similar to model songs.

Shrike-thrushes reacted just as strongly towards mimetic song as to their own when songs were presented alone, but less so when the mimetic elements were incorporated into a lyrebird song, as occurs naturally. The lyrebirds maintained the structure and complexity of model songs, but they sang fewer repetitions of individual element types. The results indicate strong selection on male lyrebirds to imitate accurately the complex vocalizations of other species, and show that species can integrate contextual information with the signal structure to distinguish between their own signals and imitations.

Crows recognise familiar human voices and the calls of familiar birds from other species
Reported on bbc.co.uk/nature 11th May 2012.

Researchers tested "crows" responses to human voices and jackdaw calls. The crows responded less to the voices of 'familiar' humans than to humans they did not know, but conversely responded more to familiar jackdaws. They suggest that crows might team up with preferred avian individuals outside their own species, with whom they might co-operate for foraging. However since humans can be a serious threat to crows, it might be important that they are alert to unfamiliar human voices.

Huge Memory in a Tiny Brain: Unique Organization in the Advertising Song of Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*
Ivanitskii VV, Marova IM
Bioacoustics 21(2):87-105. 2012

Pallas's Warbler is one of the smallest birds in the Palaearctic whose "endless" song consists mainly of various trills replacing each other in rapid succession. Individual repertoires include up to 270 types of trills and other vocal components grouped into packages which can range from 9.9 up to 68.6 seconds. Each package contains a unique set of mutually associated vocal components.

All components are typical for the given package and are usually not found in the other packages from a particular male, and the succession order of the different components within a given package varies over the course of its performance. The individual repertoire includes up to 20 different packages, which are organized serially in accordance with several programs providing a highly fixed sequence of their performance. The overall duration of such programs ranges from 25 to 275 seconds. One program contains from 2 to 11 packages. Their sequence remains absolutely constant in the repeated performances even in the longest programs. This paper also discusses some features of the vocal memory in song birds.

Long-Distance Calling by the Willow Tit, Poecile montanus, Facilitates Formation of Mixed-Species Foraging Flocks
Suzuki T
Ethology 118:10-16. 2012

We are all familiar with mixed feeding flocks of birds travelling through our woodlands in the winter months. This research from Japan provides the "first experimental evidence" that long distance calling by this particular species facilitates the establishment of mixed-species flocks at a foraging patch. A playback experiment confirmed that Willow tit calls attracted both conspecific and heterospecific members of a foraging flock.

Wind Turbine Noise
Editorial, British Medical Journal 21 April 2012. BMJ2012;344:e1527

I've still not got round to recording the sound of a wind turbine – I assume other WSRS members have.This interesting editorial is written by two public health doctors, outlining opinions that wind turbine noise can disrupt sleep and may adversely affect health, and advocating an independent review of evidence.

They suggest that "current noise measurement techniques and metrics tend to obscure the contribution of impulsive low frequency noise and infrasound" and point out that the noise generated by wind turbines has a large low frequency component.

Hearing tests for bird survey workers?
Letters, British Birds 105(3)152-153 2012.

Highly relevant to wildlife sound recordists too! Well-known bird-watcher Richard Porter writes to point out that he can no longer hear bird sounds that well, and so his ability to count birds accurately during the BTO Atlas surveys must be impaired.

He raises the intriguing thought: with an ageing BTO membership, "are some species becoming rarer simply because we can't hear them?" A reply from the BTO admits that assessing this effect would not be at all easy, and urges everyone to keep up the good work…

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WWT Collaboration

Nick Davison

The society is starting to engage with other organisations and charities to promote the importance of wildlife sound and increase the profile of the society which has an extensive library of wildlife sounds across different habitats, countries and continents which can be used for this purpose. Where ever possible we hope it results in members of the society having some recording opportunities as well.

Demonstration Weekend April 2013

The society has been asked by the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust to host a demonstration weekend in wildlife sound & recording at the London Wetlands Centre, Barnes on either the weekend of 6/7th April or 20/21st April 2013. This is a great opportunity to promote the society and wildlife sound in general.

The concept is to have members of the society spread around the reserve with their equipment set up for members of the public to listen in to what is being picked up. Different set ups from parabolic reflectors, long lead use to hydrophones will be used.

If you feel you can help in any way or can attend to help demonstrate on a morning, afternoon, day or the whole weekend planned, please contact Nick Davison – Officer without portfolio (nick@gowerphotography.co.uk), who is co-ordinating the event. Once the number of volunteers has been formalised we can arrange accommodation for those that can attend the whole weekend.

WWT Reserve Signature Sound Project

The WWT is looking to promote the wildlife sounds that occur on their reserves and has asked the society to collaborate with them. We have been asked to record the signature sounds of each of the reserves across the UK & Northern Island. We will be given privileged access to all the reserves at the times best for recording.

The recorded sounds will be used by the WWT to promote the signature events of each reserve throughout the year via their web-site, podcasts and in theatre presentations on the reserves. The society will get a wide exposure across multiple platforms and have the opportunity to promote wildlife sound especially.

The WWT is hoping to start a Sound Month each year to highlight the sounds of the natural world. The society has been asked to provide members to demonstrate at these events throughout the month at each reserve, but details have yet to be decided. The main priority at the moment is to get the recordings done.

Any member who wish to take advantage of the chance to record at their nearest reserve or any other around the UK, plus get access to these wetland habitats at time not normally available to the normal visitor, please contact Nick Davison, who is coordinating the project with Sacha Dench, the WWT Head of Media.

Nick

Sound Magazine Comments

Compiled by Jenny Beasley
Edition 168 April 2012

This was a varied collection of recordings which Ann Yates found interesting, truly international. Once again it consisted almost entirely of birds, Simon Elliott noted. For Ian Todd, Geoff's narrative was informative and interesting. Gerard Grant sincerely thanked Geoff for his work in putting this interesting and enjoyable collection together. It was much appreciated, as were the personal insights he shared in the presentation and also his gentle humour.

Entries from class 5 – (creative) 2010 Competition

2 Unknown competition entry

Philip Radford liked this dawn chorus even if it was 'creative'. The Willow Warbler song was first class. Michael Gardner found it a well-constructed and convincing soundscape. It was nice to hear the Pied Flycatcher, one of his favourite birds. Roger Boughton thought it pleasant, but felt the woodpecker could have been moved around the soundstage more.

For Gerard, it would have been nice if the soloists had been placed in different places in the stereo image, or moved around a bit, and perhaps being allowed to overlap more, e.g., allowing the Pied Flycatcher to continue at a reduced level when the Willow Warbler started.

4 Night in the Camp Gordon Edgar

Roger really enjoyed this. David Tombs thought it was OK, but it seemed to be incomplete. Simon found it pleasant enough, but felt the details behind the creative class needed to be known to make any judgement. Gerard thought it was an interesting sound picture with good variety, perspective and wide stereo, but the background varied a little in the transition to new sections.

Mixing a sequence like this and maintaining a consistent and coherent background is a challenge. For Michael, the constant "chaunk - chaunk -chaunk" calls of the Large-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus macrurus* and the Brown Hawk Owl`s *Ninox scutulata* "oo-uk...oo-uk" calls were memorable and haunting sounds. Having been with Gordon on that same "Wildeye" expedition he knows that much effort and many hours were spent making the original recordings .

6 Sika Deer in a Thunderstorm Roger Boughton

For Simon, this had great atmosphere, and it was a clever idea to mix presumably an old mono deer with a new stereo atmosphere. The thunder was well handled, but so it should be with a Schoeps/Nagra combination!

Gerard thought it a lovely recording, great over headphones. Nice to be able to present the rain and thunder in good perspective. Was there an edit at 0:56? The sound of the rain seemed to change at that point.

8 Minimac Music at a Former Military Building Patrick Franke

The origin of the title caused a bit of confusion here. Gerard thought a title more related to the content would have worked better. The calls of the Barn Swallows had a great acoustic and clarity. For Ian, the sound was strong and the impact impressive. Roger noted the hollow building acoustics around a good subject.

General Submissions

10 Pied Butcherbird Tony Baylis

Simon summed this up with one word – perfect. A great advertisement for wildlife sound recording.Simple mono excellence (and an interesting choice of mic for this – we don't hear so much from a mono 816 these days). Forget all those arty soundscapes. Brilliant job, Tony! Gerard was captivated and could have listened for longer. David thought it excellent, so pleasingly melodic and a perfect ratio of butcherbird and background echoes.

For Philip, the musical modulations were wonderful. The vocalisations do not resemble European shrikes, but does the bird's behaviour?

12 Blackbird Doug Ireland

Philip thinks a fluting Blackbird is also worth the attention of musicians. However, David has heard better and found the background awfully cluttered and distracting. Gerard thought the bird had rather a limited repertoire and Roger could have done without the gulls, but found the Blackbird interesting.

14 Crested Bellbird Tony Baylis

This was an attractive and high quality recording, appreciated by Ann and Roger. To Gerard, the sound was strangely appealing given the simplicity of the calls, but David found it tiresomely repetitive. Philip heard intriguing musical variations.

16 Grey Butcherbird Jenny Beasley

This bird gave Philip the impression of being a really fussy songster. For Gerard it was a lovely songster with a great habitat around it. He wrote: "I always say it, but I think Jenny has it right using ORTF.

The technique seems to produce so much extra spaciousness compared with standard coincident crossed pair, especially when listening on headphones. I have been using Harpex software recently to decode some recordings. It allows one to decode using a virtual crossed pair which is either coincident or has a spacing, which is variable. ORTF uses 17cm. Listening to a recording using a coincident pair seems to give a fairly closed and somewhat narrow representation of the background sound (wind in trees, etc.), whereas playing the same recording under ORTF decode spreads the background out across the width of the image much better, giving a more open and spacious image". I should point out that this only applies to cardioid microphones.

18 Mourning Sierra-finch Simon Elliott
Tim Musson could not believe how close Simon must have been to record this with the internal mics. Michael found it impressive, considering the recorder was hand-held. This type of recorder must be the ultimate when 'travelling light'. Ann enjoyed it and David thought it OK, but better windshielding would have reduced the small amount of rumble. Roger wondered if Simon was going for the easy option these days.

20 Whinchat Martin and Annie Garnett
Philip thought it took good technique to get this quality of recording of a Whinchat song in its habitat, which is usually so exposed and wind-blown. Gerard also found it a good, detailed recording of the song and enjoyed hearing the Cuckoos. The choice of mic was unusual for mono. Simon noted that this figure-of-eight mic is excellent on its own, but is rarely used in this way outside of the studio.

22 Whinchat Practice Song Martin and Annie Garnett
Michael can't remember hearing this practice song before. David found it a most interesting bird 'stutter', and Philip thought it worthy of detailed analysis. Simon said 'well done'; very interesting, with lots of mimicry. Was a short-eared owl flight call included?

24 Polecat Martin and Annie Garnett
For Ann, this was the best recording of all; fancy having a Polecat by your back door! Tim also loved it and found it really interesting. Philip wondered why this individual chose to vocalise. The recording is certainly rare and Ian thought the water running through the culvert set off the subject very well. Simon noted the unusual mic combination. To David, it sounded like some old dear trapped in the lavatory!

26 Common Frogs Martin and Annie Garnett
David liked this – it had good contrasts. Ian found the stereo impressively wide and enjoyed the buzzard mews. Simon thought a recording of a buzzard taking a frog would add spice. Philip noted that buzzards love a tasty frog meal, but toads are usually rejected. He thinks Tawny Owls behave similarly.

28 House Martins Doug Ireland
Gerard found this an attractive piece. David thought the Collared Doves provided a nice contrast and added good perspective.

30 Bittern Flight Call Doug Ireland
Short, indeed, – and rare. Simon thought this was perhaps one for the pre-roll buffer. Philip recently heard a similar call from a Bittern in flight on the Somerset Levels, but, of course, was quite unprepared for recording it!

32 Mediterranean Gull Doug Ireland
Simon noted this was quite a distinctive sound. He knows of a regular flock in Northumberland, but sadly they don't call much.

34 Bonaparte's Gulls Jenny Beasley
Both Philip and Simon noted a similarity to Black-headed Gull calls. Michael thought the calls had a 'purring' quality, but David did not find them appealing. For Gerard, gull calls have a certain attraction for moderate duration. He supposes they have evolved to be so harsh to penetrate their often noisy environments. You need something pretty shrill to penetrate the white noise from the surf.

36 Lesser Yellowlegs, Snipe and Canada Geese Jenny Beasley
David found this a much better sound and it grabbed Ian's attention, featuring, as it did, an interesting set of vocalisatiions. Simon was also interested in the participants; however he believes the North American snipe is now split from the European into a different species:Wilson's snipe *Gallinago delicata*.

This one certainly sounded higher-pitched. Gerard liked the snipe sounds, but unfortunately he has had too many recordings spoilt by Canada Geese to appreciate them even if in their native lands, where they should definitely have stayed.

38 Black Scoter Jenny Beasley
Michael was interested to hear these and the Common Scoters as sea ducks don't often feature on the Sound Magazine. Ann liked the sound of the passing ice floes, and Simon thought these and the Long-tailed Ducks set the scene well. The female growl is very similar to Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*.

40 Common Scoter Geoff Sample
Simon noted this was a rare recording for a British birdwatcher. Gerard thought it gave a good comparison. He wondered if there was perhaps less traffic noise in Canada than in Scotland? A bit of a broad assumption, I feel. Probably, in normal circumstances, the relatively few cars would have been spread out in Churchill, but we were snowed in and there was only one road passable, so we did get a lot of traffic at times.

42 Merlin Jenny Beasley
An excellent recording for David and Michael, who also liked the movement. Gerard thought it was wonderful, and could imagine my broad smile when it happened. Simon imagined it sounded like a food pass or precursor to the pass – male flies over first followed by female. However it was not that. Both birds circled the area for a while, then came closer and both swooped down to catch birds feeding on the seed or in the trees. It was probably just pure luck that they passed over the mic rig, but perhaps they were checking it out, as well.

44 Mystery Jenny Beasley
No-one could help, here. David thought it sounded like someone using a rasp on a piece of steel.

46 Red-tailed Black Cockatoos –
one-point stereo mic in reflector

48 Red-tailed Black Cockatoos –
open ORTF cardioid mics Jenny Beasley
For Ian, the comparison of the same subject recorded with two different set-ups was enlightening.He felt the open pair gave a better result.

This was one of Simon's favourite Australian sounds as the flock lazily flies over in the evening. I should point out that quite a few birds were perched in 46, but most were flying in 48.

50 Spotted Bowerbird Jenny Beasley
A fine, intimate recording, thought Gerard. Both he and Simon could see why these birds go in for visual attractants, their sound being so unmusical. The bone was a nice touch. Philip could imagine the posturing. In fact, sometimes these birds go in for a lot of mimicry, and I was hoping this one would do that.

52 Great Bowerbird Tony Baylis
David thought these were strange sounds. Gerard felt it was good to have the distance information provided for better understanding of context.

54 Water Rail Squeals

56 Water Rail Pips

58 Water Rail, various calls Terry Barnatt
Philip thought these excellent. It just shows what interesting sounds can be heard in December when most people are thinking more of Christmas. These birds are hard to pin down, though, and the pips are often overlooked, so Simon said 'Well done, Terry'.

60 Singing Gate Terry Barnatt
Gerard wondered, why a 'desperate' recording? It was well worth a go. Clearly Terry had some difficulty with the wind causing overload, but otherwise the wind was well captured and it was a beautiful and evocative recording. An identical sound from a gate had Simon hunting all over once – just couldn't locate the source until he realised it was right next to him.

64 Night-time Encounter – Fallow Deer Terry Barnatt
Gerard thought this a nice surprise for Terry, but not for the buck. Simon can imagine Terry being desperate for it to call, but dreading the likely overmodulation!

66 - 68 Sheepscapes
Alan Burbidge and Ian Todd
"The Todd-Burbidge Roadshow" – this appealed to Ian. Roger understood what was being tried here, but because of the different subject times it is difficult to make a judgement. In fact, any judgement made would be very subjective. David found the scenes pleasant and relaxing. 67 was good, but 68 perhaps just a touch over, giving only the very slightest dip in the centre. Philip and Simon preferred 66.

Gerard commented on all three tracks. He felt 66 was rather too long given the content. Regarding 67, he thought that, as one would expect from this technique, there was a pool of high frequency sound in the centre, being those sounds on axis to the reflector, and no "through the reflector" stereo. The stereo came from the sounds falling off-axis and directly onto the mics.

Track 68 gave a better stereo spread of sounds from off-axis, but still a pool of central mono.He doesn't feel that reflector MS stereo is good for moving subjects. It works well when you have a stationery single subject which can be placed on-axis and then sits in the centre of the reproduced sound stage, whilst the off axis sounds fall directly on the mics and provide a stereo background. As regards this subject – a wide ground of moving animals producing mid to lower frequency sounds – 66, the open MS pair was the perfect microphone arrangement. He is not sure why one would wish to use a reflector in this case.

70 Pied Butcherbird Duet Jenny Beasley
An appealing subject, typically Australian, good stereo; an impressive finishing track for the CD – this was the consensus. David thought it had a nice atmosphere and good depth. From Ian – a good S-to-N ratio, and a striking, cleanish subject. He could hear some human speech. Gerard's only complaint was that the piece was too short.

This tribute is from Gerard Grant – "As I finished typing this I received my copy of the journal and saw that Geoff will be retiring. When Phil stood down two years ago, I was concerned that we would not find anyone willing to offer the considerable time required with skills sufficient to maintain the high standard which had been set. My fears were completely baseless and Geoff ably took up the mantle and added his own attractive style.

Again I find myself wondering whether we will find a willing individual with the abilities that the previous editors have so ably displayed. I trust my fears will again prove unfounded. Geoff 'hit the ground running' right from his first edition, with his professional presentation, his warm manner as a presenter and his informative and thoughtful commentary. His contribution has been most valuable and is sincerely appreciated."

With this I entirely agree, as I am sure many will. We are indeed fortunate that John Paterson has agreed to take over this role.

The song of the Yellow-Browed Warbler: a Victorian description by Philip Radford.

I was pleased to discover this description of the song of the Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* by Henry Seebohm, written in June 1877, during his second expedition to Siberia.

"On the extreme summit of a spruce fir I discerned a little bird shivering its wings and making a feeble attempt to sing. It began with a faint plaintive note or two, then followed by the "weest" of the Yellow-browed Warbler by which I recognised the species, and, lastly, it finished up with a low rapid warble which appeared to be variations upon the same note. This is probably all the song of which this little bird is capable, but every particular is interesting respecting a warbler which now and again deigns to visit the British Isles."

Hopefully, some future intrepid Society adventurer to Siberia will provide us with still more particulars of this little-known warbler song?

REFERENCE:

SEEBOHM,H.,1901, The Birds of Siberia, John Murrray, London.

Separating species by their songs and calls

Phil Rudkin

In the Spring 2010 edition of the *Leicestershire and Rutland Recorder*, I wrote about *the 'Beauty and Importance of Bird Song'*. The next step is to take on the challenge of separating closely related species by their songs and calls. In the following article I will concentrate on Marsh Tit and Willow Tit. Both species are RED listed on the birds of Conservation Concern. Therefore, it is most important to monitor their status. However, if you are not a survey worker, just enjoy the challenge, and the satisfaction of learning their songs.

Just a quick note of interest! It was not realised until 1897 that the Willow Tit existed. Only the Marsh Tit was known. Two systematizes were sifting through a tray of specimens marked *'Marsh Tit'* at the British Museum, and noticed two birds which were definitely a different species (taken at Finchley). Some ornithologists were sceptical for many years after the discovery, before it was accepted officially as a new species. Therefore, reports of calls and behaviour before 1897 referred only to Marsh Tit. So, it must have been quite a challenge in that era to start looking at the biology of this new bird, the *Willow Tit.*

The calls of both birds are similar, but the songs are very different. The late Chris Mead stated that the calls are used the whole year round. The tit tribe get started early, so listen out for their songs and calls from February.

MARSH TIT,
Poecile palustris

Song: The Marsh Tit song is always rapid in delivery. It has a variety of song phrases, all based on a series of identical notes. Often delivered in a rattling gusto, and at times in a simple cadence. On first hearing the 'schuppi, schuppi, schuppi' song type, I often think of the calls of Crossbill. The most common song phrase used is a simple run of 6 to 7 twanging notes. It will then switch to a more musical rendition. These are very attractive sounds, and are far carrying through the mid canopy of the woods and copses. But, above all, everything the Marsh Tit does is busy and restless, especially in the breeding season.

Calls: These play a big part in communication for the pair. Learning the calls needs some practice, and is an interesting challenge to the ornithologist. The one most important diagnostic feature of the Marsh Tit call is the quick 'Pitcheooo' note, immediately followed by a rapid 'Zee, Zee, Zee, Zee'(a buzzing bee sound). In my experience, the 'Pitcheooo' note always precedes the buzzing notes. Remember, as with the song, the calls are always rapid and busy sounding.

A brief note on identification by sight. The Marsh Tit has the glossy black cap, and a small black bib. It is a much neater and smarter bird compared with Willow Tit. These features are often hard to observe, due to the busy behaviour of the bird. This is why the songs and calls are vital to our knowledge of their distribution.

WILLOW TIT,
Poecile montana

Song: The song reflects the bird's calm and relaxed behaviour, (very different to the Marsh Tits busy and hurried nature). E.M.Nicholson describes the Willow Tit song thus "The only one of the British tits possessing a warbling song of any appreciable carrying power, although this cannot be heard very far. It includes a series of sweet warbling notes of striking richness. Also, a deep rich melodious repetition of syllables". My own experience is similar, and I have recorded this lovely warbling song. Indeed it is very rich. One particular song phrase is rendered as 'pew, pew, pew, pew' (reminiscent of the part song of the Wood Warbler, and the Nightingale). It has a soft and haunting tone, quite exquisite!

Calls: A few notes, followed by a deep, drawn out nasal 'tchay, tchay, tchay'. This last sound is delivered slowly with definite breaks between the 'tchay' syllables.

Compare the calls: Remember, Marsh Tit: Fast delivery, always preceded with' Pitcheooo'.
Willow Tit: Slow delivery, finishing with deep, drawn out nasal 'tchay, tchay, tchay'. Does not say 'Pitcheooo'.
One other vital ingredient to the calls vocabulary is that often, some of the notes are used as a separate utterance, which enriches the sounds of these two uncommon tits.

A brief note on identification by sight: The Willow Tit has a dull black cap, and it extends further down the nape than the cap of the Marsh Tit. A bull looking neck (excavates its own nest hole in soft, decaying wood).

One very diagnostic feature of the Willow Tit is that it has a pale panel on the secondaries. Observation of this panel varies with light and positions of the onlooker. The panel wears thinner as the season progresses, and sometimes wears away altogether. After all this, I agree with Lars Svensson, "best told by voice".

At the time of writing (26th October 2011), latest news from the B.T.O. states that the Willow Tit has declined by 76% between 1994 and 2009. It is possible that this species may number fewer than 1,500 breeding pairs.
I have found in recent years that I hear more Marsh than Willow Tits in my local woodlands, in and around Rutland. When discussing the Willow Tit, it was suggested that because they are in such low numbers, they do not need

to sing often to defend territory, because of lack of opposition.

Footnote: Consider this; I find it incredibly interesting that the species were separated in 1897, with difficulty, by the two chaps sifting through specimens. Fast track to today! The year 2011. Peruse through the current field guides, and the web sites referring to the Marsh and Willow Tits, and the comment "best field guide to identification is by sound", is often quoted. After all these years, they are still regarded as difficult. Fascinating!

References: Songs of Wild Birds. Nicholson and Koch, 1936. Collins Bird Guide 2nd Edition, Lars Svensson, 2009. British Wildlife, October 2011. Page 47. BTO news. British Tits, new Naturalist, 1979. Perrins.

The next two species present a different challenge. While the **Great Spotted Woodpecke**r is expanding and widespread, its close relation the **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** is, and has been declining for many years. Current news from the B.T.O. The latest population trends for the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, is a decline of 77% between 1994 and 2009. It is possible that this species may number fewer than 1,500 breeding pairs.

During the Dutch elm disease period, this tiny woodpecker (chaffinch size) proliferated. I took the advantage, and my best recordings of this pecker were at this time, and into the early 80s. Wherever we visited, the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was heard drumming (usually from early March). I can remember observing two pairs sorting out their territories (spiralling around the tree trunk), chasing and calling at each other. This was at Burley Woods, Oakham, after a snow fall, in early March.

On another occasion, myself and two friends watched one drumming on a deer hide in Burley. Happy Days! The decline has been so steep that this rarely happens now, and county reports have few sightings published. The **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers** Conservation status is RED listed.

Therefore, comparisons of the drumming of these two woodpeckers in the field would be nearly impossible.
In addition, the Lesser bird has always been hard to monitor, because of its habit of sticking to the upper canopy, and is so small that it is a real challenge to spot it. No such problem with the Great Spotted, this bird is most successful, and also is a regular on feeders in our gardens.

These two woodpeckers have their own story, involving the mystery of the territorial sounds that they produce. We all accept in modern times that these two woodpeckers produce their drumming 'song' by striking their bill against the tree trunk/branch, (occasionally metal pylons), etc. But, before the 1930s, opinion was divided amongst the leading ornithologists of the day that the sound was produced vocally.

However, John Gould, 1873, Anthony Collett, 1906, Birds of Devon, 1892, Thomas Bewick, 1805 and Frances Pitt 1937 were just some of the natural history authors who believed the sound was mechanical.

The issue was finally settled and accepted in the 1930s, by embedding microphones in regularly drummed branches, which showed that a rapid succession of physical taps by the beak against the tree caused the noise.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER,
Dendrocopos major

The drumming of this woodpecker is loud and far carrying through the woodland and copses. The number of blows on the branch varies, and The Handbook states; 8 to 10 blows per second. Also sometimes 3 to 5 per second. Other authorities' quotes vary. However, in the field there is no need to know these statistics.

The Great Spotted Woodpeckers drum is a short burst, with a roll off ending, (much like a drum roll).The emphasis is on the first strikes, letting the momentum do the rest. It is repeated several times, and the woodpecker stops and listens for a response. Both sexes drum, and I have recorded a pair drumming to each other. They were each on a different tree close to each other, and took it in turns to drum. It was fascinating to listen to the different tones, one low and hollow, contrasting with the hard sounding of the other.

Recent research has shown that the drumming that is often heard in early January, is usually the females. But, as the days go by, then the male is the bird that does most of the drumming, which is to establish territory and attract a female. Therefore, the drumming is their song, which serves the same function as the song birds.

This woodpecker has a voice. When two birds are courting, they will chase each other through the trees, making an excited guttural trill. This behaviour is also employed when chasing a rival pair out of their territory.
They have a very loud explosive 'tchick, call, which is used extensively for all occasions, i.e. Contact with partner, with young in the nest, when leading fledglings through the trees. This is a great way of identifying them, as they will often explode just near the observer.

By late May, all the excitement has declined, and the fledglings have left the nest site, and can be heard nearby, giving a thinner version of the 'tchick' call. Very little intense drumming will be heard from then on. The main drumming period peaks in April.

It is staggering that these woodpeckers can identify individuals by their drumming sequences. During a class on woodpeckers for the WEA Rutland branch in the 80s and 90s, I tutored a Woodpecker course. One of my students announced that her father taught Morse code during the Second World War. When listening to the codes, he could tell which operator was sending the message; they each had their own individual style.
We likened that to the drumming woodpeckers.

***LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER**, Dendrocopos minor*

The small (Chaffinch size) Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers drumming needs some practice to distinguish it from its larger cousin. The drumming is 10 to 30 blows in 2 seconds (twice as long as the Great Spotteds). These also vary with each individual. There is a very noticeable difference of the Lesser Spotted drumming that is a clincher for identification; The Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers drumming is under power all the time. There is no roll off at the end. To some listeners it is likened to a machine gun, others it is an electric drill. The bird tends to stick to the upper canopy, and is very difficult to observe. The drumming is weaker than the Great Spotted, and can vary in loudness and tone. Both sexes drum.

It of course, has a voice. The very attractive high pitched calls are similar to Wryneck and Kestrel. It is rendered as pii-pii-pii-pii-pii-pii, or pee-pee-pee-pee-pee-pee. This is one helpful way of identification when monitoring this species.

The call can be heard occasionally all the year round, but most often heard in the breeding season (especially March/April). Beware; this call is mimicked well by Starlings. The Lesser Spotted has a thinner version of the Great Spotted Woodpeckers 'tchick' call. Main drumming season February to April. Its behaviour at the nest site is similar to the Great Spotted.

Footnote: In conjunction with this article, why not listen to a CD of their sounds, or go onto the internet. Google BTO BIRD FACTS, or RSPB BIRD SOUNDS. Alternatively, just Google the name of the bird, (i.e. Marsh Tit song), and you will find the links to the songs

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References:

The Handbook, 1938. Songs of Wild Birds, Nicholson, Koch, 1936. Woodpeckers of Europe, Gorman, 2004. World of Birds, Parker, 1941. British Wildlife, October 2011, Page 47, BTO News. Collins Bird Guides, 2nd Edition, Lars Svensson, 2009. Philip Rudkin .28th October 2011.

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Wild London CD Review

Nick Davison

With London having been the centre of the sporting world this summer, it seems timely that the British Library released a collection of recordings focusing on the capital city to remind us of the proximity and varied nature of the wildlife that lives there. It also ties in nicely with a lot of wildlife programming which is now looking at urban wildlife more often, counteracting the assumption that urban areas are wildlife free zones.

The CD contains 29 tracks, highlighting the variation of wildlife species in the capital, from birds and mammals to amphibians. The tracks include the species you would expect; the red deer of Richmond Park, feral pigeons, the wildfowl of the London Parks, but also includes the newer city habitants such as Peregrine Falcons and Ring necked Parakeets.

A lot of the recordists names will be familiar to members of the society, with most being members of the WSRS. The quality of the recordings is high with some of the recordings being made in London, but most are from the British Library collection and recorded at other locations around the UK. This is clearly stated on the rear of the CD and in the booklet accompanying the CD.

As somebody who likes the recording of soundscapes more than individual species, I really enjoyed the recordings made in London. Even though they were targeted at a particular species, they had the backdrop of the urban sounds you would expect to hear when listening to the wildlife in London; tube and overland trains, traffic noise and the general hum of the city.

For me it reinforced the fact that these species are found in our cities, but I would have loved to have heard a recording of a species with the chimes of Big Ben in the background. What more symbolic sound of London could you have in your recording to highlight the ingress of

wildlife into our capital city? Perhaps our London and south east based members could take this challenge on and produce recordings of the city and wildlife combined. With the British Library CD collections aimed more towards the identification and interaction type recordings perhaps there is room for the society to put together their own CD version of "Wild London", with a more soundscapes element to it?

For those people less familiar with the sounds that our wildlife makes the CD will be an invaluable identification tool to the wildlife in our Capital city, but hopefully it will also provide a surprise in highlighting the variation of wildlife that they can listen out for in their own area, whether they live in London or not.

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The BBC Natural History Unit Wildlife Sound Library 1948-1988

John F Burton

Abstract
This paper provides an historical account of the development of the BBC's Wildlife (Natural History) Sound Library from its origins in the pioneering work of Ludwig Koch, and the purchase of his collection by the BBC in 1948 and his subsequent employment by the Corporation to make more recordings until his retirement in 1951, then through the developments under his successors to the situation today.

Keywords: Ludwig Koch wildlife sound collection; BBC Sound Archives; BBC Natural History Recording Unit; BBC Wildlife Sound Library; BBC Natural History Unit Film and Sound Libraries; British Library of Wildlife Sound; British Institute of Recorded Sound: British Library National Sound Archive Wildlife Section; BBC Radio Enterprises; BBC Records; BBC Archive Services.

History and Development

The Ludwig Koch collection (1889-1961)

The BBC's collection of wildlife (natural history) sound recordings owes its origin to the acquisition in 1948 of the collection of pre-1948 recordings made on disc by the pioneer work of Dr. Ludwig Koch (1881-1974). Koch, a German Jew born in Frankfurt of musical parents, relates in his autobiography (Koch, 1955), that he was stimulated to start making recordings when he was presented with an Edison phonograph and a box of wax cylinders purchased by his father at the Leipzig Fair of 1889. Amongst other subjects, he began recording the voices of his various animals in his private menagerie, which at times was remarkably large. These included his recording of a Common or White-rumped Shama *Copysychus malabaricus*, made in 1889, the earliest known such recording of a bird (Boswall, 1985), which survives today in the BBC Sound Archives. It can be heard on an LP disc I made for BBC Records (Burton & Hawkins, 1969).

In 1906, Koch was presented with a wax disc-recording machine with 'a huge horn' by the founders of the Parlophone Company, and began seriously to make sound recordings out-doors of wild birds in Germany. Thus he in made such recordings as that of a Blackbird singing in the garden of the royal palace in Berlin, which incorporated mimicry of the characteristic sound of Kaiser Wilhelm II's car motor horn into its song. Preserved in the BBC Sound Archives, this can also be heard on the LP disc by Burton & Hawkins, 1969. He also made a recording of a Quagga in the Frankfurt Zoo, a species of zebra now extinct. Unfortunately, however, most of these early recordings on wax cylinders and wax discs have apparently not survived.

Koch's wildlife recording work was nonetheless rather fragmentary in the first two decades of the 20th century as he trained for a musical career as a concert singer and then, when the 1914-1918 war broke out and he was drafted into the military, first of all as a member of an army orchestra and then later as an intelligence officer. At the war's end, being fluent in French, he was appointed Chief Delegate for Repatriation of prisoners-of-war for the French-occupied zone of Germany. After the war he returned to his involvement in cultural and musical activities, becoming especially involved in organising festivals and exhibitions.

Eventually this led to him to becoming involved in organising a cultural department of the German EMI gramophone company, of which he became the director. Among his educational initiatives, he introduced the 'sound-book', combining text, picture and sound. Within four years he published in Germany 11 such sound-books, three of them in collaboration with the then Director of the Berlin Zoo, Dr. Lutz Heck, devoted to animals. Later, he co-operated with the renowned German ornithologist, Oskar Heinroth, in a sound-book of bird songs, *Die Gefiederte Meistersänger* (*The Feathered Mastersingers*), published in 1935. By this time he had been able to switch from pre-electrical recording to the new German Neumann electrical recording equipment.

Then by the 1930's his recording work brought him to the attention of the former Crown Prince, eldest son of the Kaiser, and to the German President, Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg. The latter invited Ludwig to play to him his recordings of Red Deer at the rut that he had made at Schorfheide, near Berlin, and which are to be found in the BBC collection. His recordings were, at this time, also being regularly broadcast on the various German radio stations.

However, with Adolf Hitler coming to power and the death of Hindenburg in 1934, life for Ludwig Koch as a Jew was becoming increasingly difficult. He was arrested four times but managed to obtain his release, on at least one occasion through the intervention of Hermann Goering, who, being a field sportsman, admired his recordings of wildlife. Nevertheless, he became more and more at risk, and, after being summoned for an interview with the Gestapo in December 1935 when he was warned to be very careful in expressing his political views in future, he made up his mind to leave Germany. Next month, he accepted an invitation to give a series of lectures in Switzerland, illustrated with some of his sound recordings. While still in Switzerland in early February 1936 he was informed that a warrant had been issued in Germany for his arrest and advised not to return. At the same time he was introduced Sir Louis Sterling, then Managing Director of EMI, who suggested he should come to England. So on 17th February 1936 he arrived at Dover and made his way to Hampstead in London, where relatives had booked him into a hotel.

In London Sir Louis Sterling helped him to get started with his plans to begin making sound recordings of British birds by offering him the share of an office in one of EMI's London premises as if he were a member of the staff.

The recordings he had used on his lecture tour of Switzerland were still there and it was some time before they could be got to London. Meanwhile, Koch maintained that the bulk of the recordings he had left in Germany had been destroyed by the Nazi authorities. Incidentally, I wondered if, in fact, they had not been destroyed and might be lying in some obscure archive of the German gramophone industry.

So in the early 1970s I made enquiries in Germany in the hope that I could track them down but without success. I assume, therefore, that Ludwig was correct in his belief. However, Professor Julian Huxley, who was then Director of the London Zoo, invited him to play his recordings to him and some other British zoologists. As he had not yet received the recordings he had left behind in Switzerland, he was fortunate in being loaned by one of HMV's managers a set of the recordings from his sound-book *Gefiederte Meistersänger*. This eventually led to him meeting and playing his recordings to Harry Witherby, a distinguished ornithologist, and his brother, George, who were senior partners of the publishers H.F. & G Witherby, which specialised in publishing natural history books.

They introduced Ludwig to E.M. (Max) Nicholson, an enthusiastic and excellent field ornithologist, who they had just commissioned to write a book on the songs of wild birds. He at once suggested that his book should be a sound-book illustrated with new recordings to be made by Ludwig. Therefore Witherbys arranged with the Parlophone Company to assist Ludwig in making them. Thus in April 1936, in north-west Kent and Surrey, he began recording his first British birds and by the beginning of June he had recordings of all the 15 species required for the two 10-inch 78 rpm discs for the first sound-book. Under the title *Songs of Wild Birds,* it was on sale in bookshops and gramophone record shops in time for Christmas that year. As it proved a great success, Witherbys asked him and Max Nicholson to produce a second sound-book *More Songs of Wild Birds* and with the same team of recording engineers to assist him he began recording the 21 species needed for the three 10-inch discs to accompany the new book.

E.M. (Max) Nicholson & Ludwig Koch selecting recordings for their book Songs of Wild Birds (1937)

Most of the recordings were made in the vicinity of Chobham Common and Richmond Park in Surrey. Again the sound-book was published on schedule in 1937 in time for Christmas, together with another Witherbys' sound-book with recordings by Ludwig, *Hunting by Ear*, featuring the sounds of a foxhunt. The great success of these sound-books led to another one, *Animal Language*, in collaboration with Julian Huxley, based on the recordings Koch made at Whipsnade Zoo, and published by *Country Life* late in 1938. Many of these recordings were later acquired by the BBC.

While Ludwig was making the recordings for *Animal Language*, he received an invitation from the Belgian Royal Family to collaborate with Queen Elisabeth, the Queen Mother of the Belgians, in making sound recordings of the birds inhabiting the Royal Park at Laeken, a project that been a wish of her late husband, King Albert. In November 1937 travelled to Laeken, a few miles from Brussels, to meet the Queen, who he discovered was both enthusiastic and knowledgeable about birds.
They got on well together and in March 1938 Ludwig began, with the help of a recording engineer from Parlophone, in exceptionally warm, almost summer-like, weather. Recording so near to Brussels was, of course, difficult and Ludwig had to seek quieter locations elsewhere in Belgium to obtain some of the species they wanted. One of Ludwig's recordings from Laeken, preserved in the BBC Sound Archives and include by me in the LP *A Salute to Ludwig Koch*, is of an Icterine Warbler, a noted mimic of other species, mimicking the Queen calling out, as she often did, "Ludwig, Ludwig". The publication of the Queen's and Ludwig's book *Oiseaux Chanteux de Laeken* was planned for 1939, but because of the threatening political situation in Europe and the Second World War, it was not published until 1951, when it was distributed free to Belgian schools and natural history organizations. Some of these Belgian recordings were eventually added to the BBC collection.

A week after Ludwig Koch's arrival in England in 1936, the BBC expressed an interest in his recordings and he made the occasional broadcast. Soon after the Second World War began, He was interned on the Isle of Man as an ' alien enemy ', but was suddenly released in August 1940 and returned to London. At Julian Huxley's suggestion, he offered his services to the BBC and joined the European Service. His activities there included recording the voices of farm animals and these were preserved in the BBC's Effects Library.

In 1942 he secured his transfer from Bush House to Broadcasting House and was then able to broadcast for the Talks Department and for Children's Hour, illustrating his talks with his wildlife recordings. In 1943 he went freelance, working particularly with the then popular BBC Home Service radio programme *Country Magazine* ad also making series of short programmes about birds featuring his recordings.

By then he had become nationally very well known as a broadcaster. The public much enjoyed his highly characteristic and charming Germanic pronunciation of the English language. He more or less sang it. For example, one of my favourite memories from a broadcast of his about Grey Seals sounded as follows:

' Sur zing-ing off sealss. Ant zo sur storiess off sailors who haf hurd veird ant eerie soundss came to leiff. Ant also sur age-long storiess off sur mermaids zing-ing on sur rockss.' In between regular lecture tours up and down Britain he privately undertook field recording trips in various locations, notably to Norfolk to record the Bittern, to Slimbridge in Gloucestershire to record White-fronted Geese, to the Mute Swan colony at Abbotsbury in Dorset, and to record breeding Greenshanks in the Scottish Highlands.

Then in 1946, a features producer in the BBC West Region in Bristol with a special interest in the countryside and wildlife, Desmond Hawkins, who went on to found the BBC Natural History Unit, established on the Home Service radio a regular natural history series with an emphasis on the then growing interest in bird-watching. It was subtitled 'a programme of science and observation' with the clear intention of breaking away, as Desmond expressed it, 'from the sentimental whimsy of the Mr. and Mrs. Blackbird journalism that was the idiom of the popular press at that time.'

Desmond saw Ludwig Koch and his sound recordings and a regular ingredient in the programmes that brought the outdoors into the listener's home at Sunday lunchtimes. He found the ideal signature 'tune' for the programme in Ludwig's 1937 Surrey recording of the territorial call of the Curlew, the wild quintessential voice of the estuaries and moors of the West Country. The recipe was a great success and generated other successful radio series from the West of England Home Service: *Bird Song of the Month* (from 1947), *Birds in Britain* (from 1951), and, later, from 1956, *Naturalists' Notebook*.

About this time UNESCO, of which Julian Huxley had become Director-General, passed a resolution that Ludwig Koch's collection sound recordings of birds and other animals should be preserved for posterity and placed in the care of the British Trust for Ornithology. The Trust lacked the financial resources to undertake this scheme, but Max Nicholson, then the BTO's chairman and a prominent civil servant, raised the subject of the resolution with the then Director-General of the BBC, Sir William Haley, during one of his regular conversations with him on behalf of the Government. Haley said the BBC was keen to acquire the collection.

Thus, towards the end of November 1947, the BBC discussed the subject with Ludwig, who agreed to the sale early in 1948 and on 1 March that year he found himself once more a member of the BBC staff, charged with processing his recordings for incorporation into the BBC Sound Archives and adding to them through further fieldwork. The task of sorting, editing, processing and cataloguing his existing recordings occupied Ludwig and Timothy Eckersley (later Head of Recording Services, Radio) three years as there were thousands of unedited discs, some hitherto stored on the premises of His Master's Voice (HMV) and others, so Tim Eckersley told me, in Ludwig's flat – some under the bed.

The collection comprised, when the task was completed, more than 500 recordings of 138 species of birds, 60 mammals and a small number of small number of recordings of various other animals, such as frogs and insects. Some of the recordings Koch had made in Germany and Belgium in the 1930s were included. In view of the UNESCO resolution, the BBC agreed to make the collection and future additions available for scientific research and arranged that the British Trust for Ornithology and the Sub-Department of Animal Behaviour at Cambridge University should receive copies of all the recordings. The Department of Entomology at the Natural History Museum in London received copies of all insect recordings (Burton, 1967). To oversee this arrangement and advise the BBC, a panel with representatives from these scientific organisations was established, but ceased to exist after 1958.

When he was not busy with the processing work, Ludwig Koch he was active in the field in various parts of the British Isles, making new recordings and regularly broadcasting about the expeditions during which he had made them. These included visits to the Channel Islands, Dartmoor, the Norfolk Broads, Cornwall and the Scilly Islands, the Pembrokeshire island of Skomer, the Scottish Highlands and Shetland.

By the time he retired from the BBC staff in 1951 at the age of 70, he had greatly enlarged his collection. He had not wanted to retire, but the BBC wished to switch from disc to tape recording, which he was unwilling to do, insisting that the quality of the latter was not as good. But after his retirement he continued to record birds for a while. When he was 71 he undertook an expedition to record, among other species, the Great Northern Diver, which the BBC acquired from him. The last recording he made for the BBC was of a nest of young Swallows in Somerset in 1961, when he was in his 80th year.

This and the Iceland expedition were, as I know, the only occasions on which he was persuaded to use a tape recorder. Altogether the recordings in the BBC Wildlife Sound Library amounts to 171 species of birds, 65 mammals and 10 other animal species. Copies of all these are also preserved in the wildlife section of the British Library in London, together with al his original unedited discs and other material that he bequeathed. The British Library has fulfilled Ludwig Koch's long cherished dream, previously frustrated, of a sound institute devoted to the permanent preservation of the sounds of wildlife, music, songs, folklore, famous voices of the past, languages, dialects, etc., from all over the world, where they are accessible to everyone. In 1960 he was appointed a M.B.E. in recognition of his services to broadcasting and natural history.

Like other of his former friends and colleagues, I kept in contact with Ludwig Koch until his death in London on 4 May 1974 and visited him whenever I could. At a service of thanksgiving for his life held at the church of Our Lady of the Assumption and St. Gregory in Warwick Street, London, his friend and collaborator Max Nicholson gave the address, Timothy Eckersley read the Lesson, Dilys Breese from the Natural History Unit delivered the Reading from a sermon of St. Francis of Assisi and I played a selection of his bird recordings.
The members of the Wildlife Sound Recording Society, of which Ludwig was its first President, presented two bench-type seats in his memory to, respectively, the Bristol and London Zoos.

Eric Simms (1951-1958)

Shortly before Ludwig Koch's retirement in 1951, the BBC appointed as his successor a schoolmaster, Eric Simms DFC, who had served with distinction with the Royal Air Force's Bomber Command during the Second World War. Eric was a well known amateur field ornithologist in the Midlands and brought much expertise to the job. Ludwig had been reluctant to retire and deplored not being able 'to train a new man.' in his methods.

Before taking over from Ludwig, Eric Simms received his technical sound recording engineering training at the BBC's Engineering School at Wood Norton in Worcestershire; so he was well prepared when he took up his new work in Broadcasting House in London. During his training at Wood Norton he had had opportunities to make disc field recordings of birds and his first one of the spring song of a Robin is in the BBC Sound Archives (Simms, 1976).

Eric Simms using a BBC 18-inch parabolic reflector in the 1950s

However, Eric was anxious to try tape recording of birds for the first time and in the spring of 1951 he conducted an experiment in London's Kensington Gardens 'whereby the dawn bird songs near the statue of Peter Pan would be recorded simultaneously on both the old portable disk recorder, which the BBC used for outside work, and a new tape apparatus. The output of the same microphone was to be used to keep a constant level on the most powerful singer.' When he listened to the results in a studio in B.H., he discovered that there was less surface noise audible on the tape and more birds could be heard, thus giving the tape recording 'a natural depth and perspective.' The longer recording time possible with tape was also an advantage (Simms, 1976).

The previous October Ludwig Koch had been persuaded to try out tape recording birds with a BBC unit. He made recordings of a Robin in the same spot where he had recorded one on disc in 1948. However, he considered that: ' Although there can be no doubt that from the technical point of view tape-recording is easier and much more convenient than disc-recording, I still prefer the disc-recording which I made of the robin; it comes nearer to nature, and that is what matters to me. I found the tape recording to piercing (Koch, 1955).

Satisfied that tape recording was the preferable method, Eric Simms discussed his future recording projects with Timothy Eckersley of Central Programme Operations, later to become Head of Recording Services, Radio. Tim suggested that he should listen to all the existing natural history recordings with a view to replacing some of the older ones and filling in gaps in the coverage. So Eric Simms began a programme of recording trips that in his first year took him from recording Little Ringed Plovers in Essex, Pink-footed Geese in Scotland with Peter Scott, and wildfowl and other birds in Norfolk.

Field trips in the following two years included recording waders at high tide on Hilbre Island in the Cheshire Dee, Badgers in Surrey, a wide variety of birds at the RSPB's Minsmere reserve on the Suffolk coast, Stone Curlews on the Suffolk Brecks, Grey Seals and breeding seabirds on the Farne Islands off Northumberland's coast, and Red Deer, Golden Eagles at the nest, and other highland birds in the Scottish Cairngorms. In the summer of 1954 he mounted a month-long expedition to record the sounds of the wildlife of the Camargue in southern France, famous for, among other species, its breeding colonies of Flamingoes. The summer of 1956 saw him recording birds as he drove through Spain with Bob (G.F.)Wade, a highly experienced and skilful BBC recording engineer, from Santander on the north coast to the renowned Coto Donana on the south-west coast (Simms, 1957).

Eric Simms & G.F.(Bob) Wade recording from their portable boat in the 1950s.

Bob had been appointed in 1952 to accompany Eric on all his major recording trips. Together they established the BBC Natural History Recording Unit equipped with a specially built recording van, 36-inch and 18-inch parabolic reflectors, and a small transportable folding boat with an outboard motor (Simms & Wade, 1953; Simms, 1979).

Processing all his selected recordings and processing them on to discs for the Sound Archives, plus others obtained from other sources, was, of course, time consuming.

Nevertheless, as well as making and processing sound recordings Eric Simms broadcast regularly from 1951 on radio, using them as sound illustrations. His broadcasts included a monthly series he devised in 1952 called *Countryside of the Month* and which carried on far into the 1970s, Each programme included a contribution from Eric illustrated with sound recordings. He also made contribution to the *The Naturalist* a nd other radio programmes originating from Bristol in the 1950s.

When the BBC Natural History unit was established in Bristol a proposal was made to transfer Eric Simms there to preside over a new natural history sound and film library. This is not appeal to Eric as, although it would have involved some sound recording fieldwork, it would not offer many opportunities for broadcasting. Moreover, it would have involved being uprooted from London, where Eric and his wife were happily settled. He therefore took an opportunity to transfer to the then new BBC Schools Television Department.

So in 1958, when the sound recording unit was transferred to Bristol and combined with the then fledgling natural history film library, Roger Perry was appointed to the post of Librarian and Field Research Assistant. Timothy Eckersley as Head of Recording Services retained ultimate responsibility for the policy concerning the further development of the wildlife sound collection and was anxious to ensure that this was conducted independently and was not therefore entirely subject to the immediate pressures of television. Inevitably, with the rapid growth of television, especially natural history programmes, such an independent path was impossible to maintain beyond the 1960s and, as will be seen later, I found it sensible to work as closely as possible with my television colleagues as well as those in radio.

During his period of responsibility for the BBC's collection of natural history recordings, Eric Simms more or less doubled the size of the collection, particularly with regard to western European birds, not only with his own recordings but also with others acquired from sources in Denmark, Sweden, Japan, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Australia. He also received recordings of penguins made by Dr. Bill Sladen in Antarctica, of the Wandering Albatross and other seabirds from Gough Island in the South Atlantic by Dr. Michael Swales and birds from the Yorkshire moors by John Kirby, one of the first British amateur wildlife sound recordists. Eric continued, however, to make wildlife sound recordings in the course of his filming work for Schools Television and passed them on to me at Bristol for incorporation into the BBC collection.

Roger Perry (1958-1962)

On joining the BBC Natural History Unit in Bristol in 1958, Roger Perry set about making new recordings for the Natural History Sound Library, as it became known, as well as organising and developing the fledgling Natural History Film Library. He undertook field trips, among other locations, to the Scottish Highlands to, make, among other things, sound recordings of Ospreys at the nest, which had only just recently made a comeback as a breeding species after many years absence; to the Savernake and New Forests and the Republic of Ireland, accompanied by, like his predecessor, sound recording engineer Bob Wade. As a result they added many fine recordings to the library. However, from 1959 onwards, the ever-increasing demands of television for new natural history films had made it impossible for Roger to find sufficient time for developing the sound library as well. Thus the situation was rather different from that in Ludwig Koch's and Eric Simms's time when they could concentrate on field trips to obtain new sounds. In the meantime the number of amateur recordists offering their wildlife recordings to the Library had increased and thus more and more of his time was spent assessing them with a view to possible purchase.

So I was appointed as his assistant in May 1960 and concentrated on the film library, not only with cataloguing its burgeoning acquisitions and advice service, but in searching the world for new ready-made films to satisfy the Unit television programme output. As well as supervising the work of the combined libraries, Roger continued to make excellent sound recordings with Bob Wade, and also featured them in his radio broadcasts, such as the series *Bird Song of the Month.* In the spring of 1962, desire for travel became too much for him to resist any longer and he resigned in order to go to South America. Later, he became Director of the Charles Darwin Research Station on the Galapagos Islands for several years before entering the diplomatic career and finishing up as Administrator of the South Atlantic island of Tristan da Cuhna.

John F. Burton (1962-1988)

When Roger Perry resigned from the Natural History Unit, I was appointed as his successor and soon afterwards I was joined by Michael Kendall as my assistant. As I did with Roger Perry, Mike concentrated on the film library, while I turned my attention to the sound library, although retaining an overall reponsibility for both. At that time, an increasing number of amateur enthusiasts were following in the footsteps of John Kirby and, with the portable tape recorders that were then becoming commercially available, were making wildlife sound recordings and were offering them for sale to the BBC. For instance, already by 1968 no fewer than 110 individuals had submitted their recordings for consideration (Simms, 1979).They varied in quality, but some were certainly of broadcasting standard and listening through them and selecting those worth having, began to occupy an increasing amount of my time.

It was not always easy to explain to these enthusiasts that our priority was not to fill gaps in our coverage of British species but to widen it to the world. Nevertheless, the flow of tape recordings from outside sources was such that backlogs tended to develop and finding the time to reduce them became something of a problem. I must confess that occasionally this was exacerbated by my spending too much time attempting to obtain the maximum possible from the many tape recordings I made on my own field trips, such as the very extensive series of recordings I made of the full vocabularies of Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls in connection with the Italia Prize-winning television film *Signals for Survival* made by Hugh Falkus and Nobel Prize-winner Professor Niko Tinbergen.

With the growing demands of television, what became initially my chief priority was the acquiring of good atmosphere recordings of as many world habitats as possible to provide the sound background to wildlife films. The ideal atmosphere recording should provide the general ambience of a desired habitat with the appropriate birds, animal and other natural sounds without any of them being too loud. Eric Simms and Roger Perry had made a start on developing this aspect of the library, but it was still in its infancy. As a stopgap expedient measure I listened to all the existing recordings of sufficient length to determine which of them could be used as atmospheres until more suitable recordings could be obtained.

When Roger had taken over the sound collection it had originally been developed to service sound radio, not the needs of television. Moreover, the collection was basically orientated on Europe and more especially on the British Isles. It needed to become worldwide in scope. Therefore as well as making the recording of atmosphere an important part of my field trips, I made a point of encouraging wildlife sound recordists with whom I was in contact overseas to include atmosphere tracks among those recordings they offered me. I also made and collected very neutral atmosphere recordings to which the appropriate birds and other natural sounds could be added where desired.

In due course, as the Natural History Unit grew and expanded its film projects to various parts of the world, I received from the film producers large quantities of recordings made by the crew sound recordists, who often, understandably, lacked natural history knowledge. Though on the whole a useful and welcome source of, in particular, atmosphere recordings from overseas locations, where free of extraneous noise, they were sometimes quite badly documented and of variable quality. This often involved me in spending a lot of time listening through piles with relatively little useful outcome. Fortunately, I did manage to advise a couple of the best film recordists to improve their documentation, with good results.

The requirements of television became increasingly demanding as the output of natural history films grew and not only from the Natural History Unit in Bristol. Some producers underestimated the importance of planning ahead for the natural sound tracks and the need to make their own field recordings where possible. They assumed that they could get everything they needed from the sound library, but even when the right recordings were available they did not always suit the ambience of the film locations.

I endeavoured to get the NHU's producers or their researchers to discuss their likely needs in the planning stage before filming began, usually by providing me with their working scripts. Sometimes, I was then able to fit in a field trip to meet their requirements and the library's or recommend a competent freelance wildlife sound recordist they could commission.

It had become clear to me early on that many of the early recordings in the collection were not really good enough for current broadcasting standards.

And so I engaged one of the best of the amateur wildlife recordists, Richard Margoschis who had recently retired from his local government post, to play through all the species recordings and evaluate them, identifying those that were no longer suitable for broadcasting purposes.

My Natural History Unit colleague, Jeffery Boswall, who was the Unit's radio producer but later moved to television production, was, and still is, very interested in the recording of wildlife sounds and has built up a world-wide reputation for his documentation of commercially published recordings. He has published, sometimes in collaboration with others, discographies of such recordings from all over the world. With his help, I built up a sizeable collection of commercial recordings, which provided a very useful back-up to the BBC collection.

Their use in programmes was, of course, paid for. In 1969 Jeffery, together with Patrick Sellar, were instrumental in persuading the then British Institute of Recorded Sound in London to provide a home for the newly established British Library of Wildlife Sound (BLOWS). Wildlife sound recordists from many parts of the world have donated their recordings to the library, so that today it has the most comprehensive collection of animal sound recordings in the world and is now housed, together with the British Institute for Recorded Sound, in the National Sound Archive of the British Library, as the Wildlife Section.

John Burton recording Large Marsh Grasshoppers in the Somerset Levels in 1968.

The BBC Natural History Unit maintained close ties with BLOWS from the beginning and, along with other users, is able to negotiate for the use of the National Sound Archive Wildlife Section's recordings in its programmes. From the start, the BBC donated duplicates of all its wildlife sound recordings to BLOWS in accordance with its undertaking in 1948 to make them available for *bona fide* scientific research (Burton, 1967). In this connection the BBC set-up an advisory panel with appropriate representatives of the scientific community which met in Broadcasting House in London for several years up to about 1958. I attended one of these panel meetings in about 1955 as the representative of the British Trust for Ornithology. Later, BLOWS and its successor received from the BBC for safe-keeping all Ludwig Koch's original unedited recordings and various other items of interest, including his wax cylinders.

From 1969 and on into the 1980s I collaborated with BBC Radio Enterprises, later BBC Records, to produce a series of LP discs and, later, cassettes of BBC wildlife sound recordings for commercial sale. I also involved Eric Simms in this project – he produced 14 LP titles – and David Tombs and Nigel Tucker as well. I worked closely with the Sound Archives programme Unit in Broadcasting House, London, and found outlet for the broadcasting of our wildlife sounds in some of their programmes for Radios 2 and 4. It is also perhaps worth mentioning that in 1983 the Senior Editor of the then forthcoming monumental work The Birds of the Western Palaearctic (Oxford University Press) asked me to develop a short paper he had received from ornithologist and wildlife sound recordist E.D.H. Johnson on the similarity of sounds produced by some Palaearctic birds, amphibians and insects because of access to the BBC wildlife sound collection and my personal familiarity with these species and others whose sounds could be confused with one another. The outcome was a substantial paper published in the journal British Birds (Burton & Johnson, 1984), the contents of which were eventually incorporated into The Birds of the Western Palaearctic.

During his time in charge of the sound library, Roger Perry had continued Eric Simms's practice of processing the selected new recordings from tape to 78 rpm discs in an editing channel in Broadcasting House in London. I did the same for a time, then decided that it was more economical of time and money for me to do the work in Broadcasting House in Bristol, especially as the editing and recording engineers there were both perfectly competent at this work and because of the Natural History Unit presence there had become interested in the subject. When the master tapes for the new discs were ready I would take batches of them to Sound Archives in London for the final processing to discs. Eventually the decision was taken to process the new recordings to 33.3 rpm LP discs. By 1965 I had decided for similar reasons to switch from the original arrangement to using BBC Bristol sound recording engineers on my field trips.

By 1970 it became necessary to switch from mono to stereo and this meant replacing good mono recordings already in the collection with fresh ones in stereo. This became even more important for the atmospheres. In the earlier years Sound Archives insisted on full-track tape recordings at tape speeds of 15 ips or 7.5 ips.

For some time recordings made on the new cassette recorders were not accepted, but this policy was gradually relaxed as the quality of the latter improved. Then in the 1980s digital recorders arrived and we began recording with them just before I retired in May 1988.

Early in 1971 I began working on field trips with David Tombs, a BBC sound recording engineer in Bristol who was very interested in bird-watching and keen to make recordings in stereo. In the course of investigating the switch to stereo, I had discussions with David Stripp of the BBC's stereophonic department in London and he played me experimental recordings he had made of the dawn chorus of birds. As a result I arranged to meet him at the RSPB's Minsmere bird reserve on the Suffolk coast to experiment with making stereo recordings of some of the birds there. David Tombs accompanied me and the two engineers were able to discuss and compare ways of getting good results.

As a result David Tombs conceived some good ideas and when he and I returned to Minsmere in the last week of May 1971 he had constructed a parabolic reflectors which, together with our stereo Nagras (IV-S), proved to be great asset and were very pleased with our results. Thereafter we recorded almost exclusively in stereo. On later field recording trips we were equipped with paired Sennheiser gun microphones and other equipment designed and built by David Tombs, including a very effective wind shield for open microphones (Tombs, 1974; 1980).

John Burton & David Tombs testing stereo recording equipment on the Bristol Downs in June 1972 (BBC publicity photograph)

Minsmere continued to be a favourite location for our fieldwork and in August 1972 I produced and David Tombs recorded a stereo radio programme for Radio 4 entitled *A Day at Minsmere* with Robert Dougall, the BBC TV newsreader, then RSPB President and a keen bird-watcher, and Herbert Axell, the RSPB's chief warden at Minsmere.

The programme was broadcast later that month and was as far as I know the first BBC natural history radio programme to be broadcast in stereo. In subsequent years David Tombs and I made several others in connection with field recording expedtions to southern France, Spain and the Gambia in West Africa.

During my period in charge of the BBC Wildlife Sound Library from 1962 to 1988 I undertook field recording trips to various locations in Britain and in Poland, Russia, Holland, France, Spain and in West Africa (the Gambia and Senegal). In the late 1980s Nigel Tucker joined me and Wendy Dickson, the Secretary/Assistant in the Sound Library, and went with David Tombs on field recording expeditions to the United States, Madagascar and Pakistan, bringing back many valuable digital recordings of exotic species.

During the latter 1980s I was allowed to charge non-BBC users for the use of BBC wildlife sounds and for advice on their use, and this became a useful source of income for purchasing recordings from freelance wildlife recordists. An important part of the staff of the Wildlife Sound Library has always been provide advice to prospective users both within and without the BBC. Requests and the action taken were recorded on a standard form and subsequently filed.

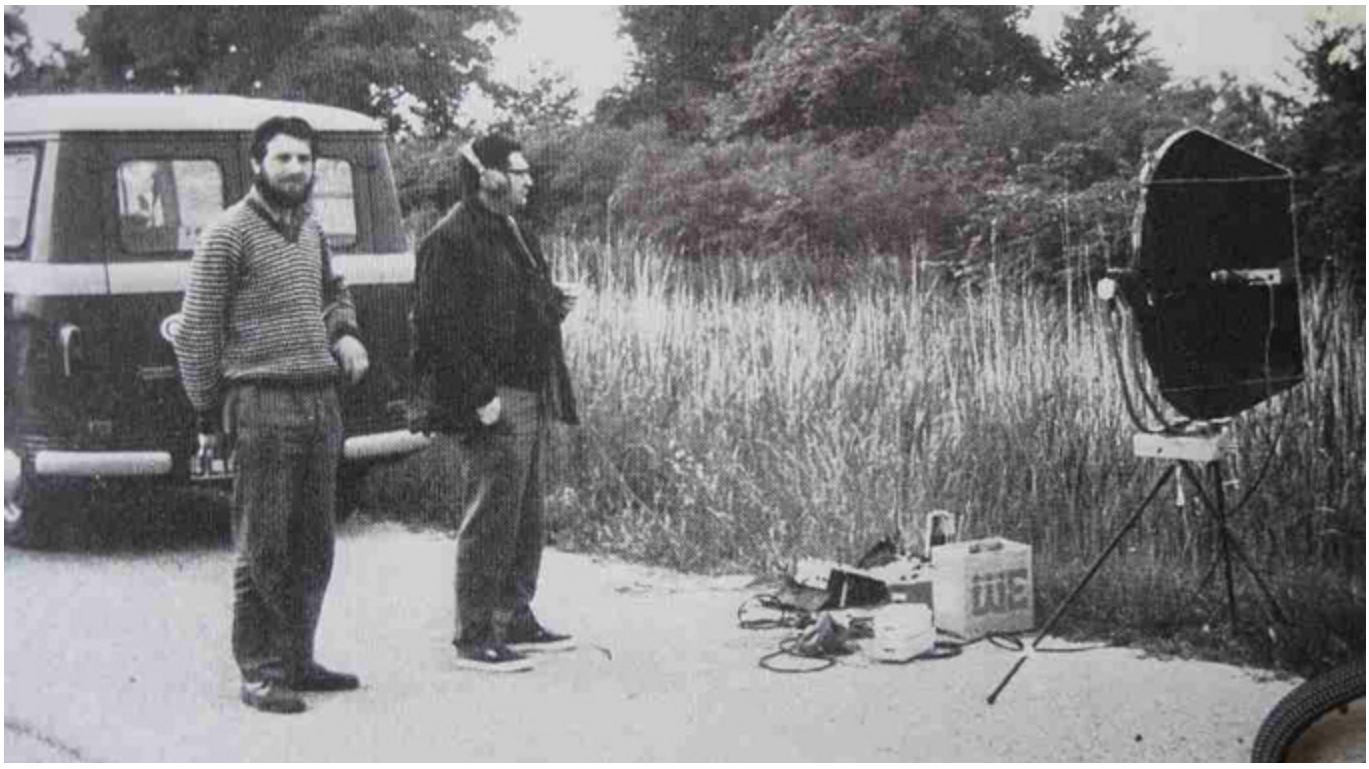
Nigel Tucker (1989-1996) and Alan Baker (1989-)

After I retired, my post as Organiser, Natural History Sound Recordings was advertised but in the event was apparently never filled as advertised. Instead Nigel Tucker carried on the processing work on short-term contracts and continued to undertake field recording trips up to 1993, usually linked to television films then in production, after which year no more were undertaken.

His field recording included expeditions to the United States and Canada (1987, 1988 & 1989), Kenya and Madagascar (1988), Kenya and Tanzania (1990), Russia and Kazakhstan (1991), New Zealand and Fiji (1993) and Hong Kong, New Zealand and Australia (1993). After my departure Helen Wharam was appointed as Librarian to run the 'service to customers' work of the Wildlife Sound Library, together with an assistant, Nicola Eastham.

The library eventually merged with the Natural History Film Library in 1996, coming under the overall responsibility of the Natural History Unit's then Film Librarian, Alan Baker, now Archive Services Manager. After 1996, Alan Baker informs me, the two libraries no longer formed part of the Natural History Unit but became instead part of library services based in London.

Apart from receiving, processing and cataloguing selected recordings passed on by programme production units at, due to lack of time and resources, a low rate of intake, from about 1990 the Library apparently no longer purchased recordings from wildlife sound recordists and other outside sources to increase the size and scope of its permanent collection.



David Tombs & John Burton in the Camargue in 1973 using the stereo parabolic reflector designed and constructed by DT.

Producers in the BBC Natural History Unit nowadays purchase recordings from the Wildlife Section of the National Sound Archive of the British Library if appropriate recordings are not forthcoming from the BBC's own Wildlife Sound Library. In recent years, however, Chris Watson, a former BBC North Region sound recording engineer and enthusiastic wildlife sound recordist has worked on many BBC Natural History Unit wildlife film productions as a freelance. After the programmes have been 'aired', his high quality recordings are passed on to the sound library and given a high priority among those that are processed, as in the past, for the Sound Archives and the library. Stuart Reading of the BBC Natural History Unit informed me (May 2012) that the wildlife sound collection comprises some 22,000 recordings of which about 4,000 are atmospheres.

Alan Baker further informs me than in 2003 the digitisation of the collection of wildlife recordings was completed and that a new digital production and archive system, called Fabric is being introduced. The already digitised natural history sound collection will be among the first to be loaded into Fabric and will therefore become much more readily accessible to all of the BBC. Moreover, the BBC copyright part of the collection will also be available commercially via the website:
http://www.prosoundeffects.com/pro-sound-effects-publishers-catalog-demos-metadata/bbc-sound-effects-libraries/bbc-nature-sound-effects-library.html

John Burton recording Calandra Larks in stereo in the Sierra de Gredos, central Spain, in 1983

Nigel Tucker eventually left the BBC in April 1996, and set up as a freelance digital wildlife sound recordist and supplier of such recordings to film-makers and other users, but continued to come into Broadcasting House, Bristol, for two-three days at a time up to 1997 to process new recordings in the usual way.

I am greatly indebted to Alan Baker, Stuart Reading and Nigel Tucker for information concerning the organisation of the Wildlife Sound Library after I retired from the BBC in 1988, and to Roger Perry and David Tombs for valuable comments on my original draft.

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Recording Dolphins in Southern Angola

Caroline R Weir

In 2008 I travelled to southern Angola (west coast of Africa) to commence a research project investigating the abundance and ecology of a very poorly-known cetacean species, the Atlantic humpback dolphin *Sousa teuszii*. This species is endemic to tropical and sub-tropical waters along the west coast of Africa, and currently ranges from Western Sahara to Angola. Listed by the IUCN (2008 assessment) as a 'Vulnerable' species, the Atlantic humpback dolphin is of increasing conservation concern due to having: (1) a limited geographic range; (2) a strictly near-shore distribution (which brings it into regular contact with humans); (3) an exclusive occurrence within the waters of developing countries; and (4) a low abundance. Due to logistical challenges little cetacean research occurs in West African waters, and sightings/specimens of this species have been very scarce since the first skull was collected off Cameroon in 1892. Decades of unreported by-catch, directed takes and habitat degradation are considered likely to have impacted these dolphins throughout their range, but few scientific studies have been undertaken to date.

Atlantic humpback dolphins travelling along the coast of Namibe Province in Angola. The species is named for its characteristic dorsal 'hump' on which the small dorsal fin is situated.

My research in Namibe Province, southern Angola, was the result of a chance email from a kayaker who had photographed humpback dolphins north of the town of Tombua in 2004. His photographs provided the first evidence that humpback dolphins occurred in Angola, and he also put me in contact with a small sports fishing lodge at Flamingos that agreed to provide a boat and accommodation for me to carry out a pilot study of the animals. My study was focused on establishing an initial estimate of the number of dolphins present in the study area and their distribution. However, the lack of previous field studies of Atlantic humpback dolphins meant that almost any data I collected on the animals would be novel and represent a significant contribution to knowledge of the species. I therefore went to Angola aiming to collect as much data on various aspects of dolphin ecology and biology as possible.

One aspect of cetacean behaviour that has fascinated me from an early stage was their use of acoustics for navigation, hunting and communication. Dolphins emit whistles and burst pulse sounds that appear to have a social, communicative role, while clicks are apparently produced primarily for echolocation purposes. Nobody had previously recorded the sounds produced by Atlantic humpback dolphins, and this became one of the core secondary aims of my project. Not only was a description of their vocalisations of personal interest, but it was also an important requirement for long-term monitoring of the species in West Africa.

Environmental impact assessments and scientific monitoring studies along the west coast of Africa have recently begun using static acoustic monitoring devices, which are deployed on the seabed for periods of weeks to months and collect real-time data on the biological sounds produced by cetaceans and other fauna. Evaluating and analysing those data to assess the occurrence of different cetacean species in a region is dependent on an understanding of the sounds produced by each species. Given its vulnerable conservation status, the Atlantic humpback dolphin is of key concern for impact assessments, and data on their vocalisation parameters was therefore important for interpreting acoustic monitoring data throughout the wider West Africa region.

Much logistical planning went into preparing for the first January 2008 expedition, including the purchase of acoustic equipment. The fishing lodge was in a remote location and had generator-produced electricity for only several hours each day.

I had no previous experience of the boat, the animals or the study area, and was uncertain what kind of deployment conditions I would be facing. There was also the limitation of travelling into Angola, since I already had a vast array of other field equipment including large zoom camera lenses taking up my luggage allowance. I therefore opted to purchase simple and robust acoustic equipment that could be quickly deployed from the side of a small boat. I selected a single-element Sensor Technology SQ26-08 hydrophone (supplied by Cetacean Research Technology; www.cetaceanresearch.com) and an M-Audio MicroTrack II solid state digital recorder. The latter could be charged via the laptop while the generator was on each evening at the camp, and the hydrophone was powered directly from the digital recorder.

The MicroTrack recorder had an upper sampling rate of 96 kHz and a built-in anti-alias filter with a -3 dB point set at 46 kHz. The conservative aliasing-free recording limit was therefore around 44 kHz, which was sufficient to record tonal calls (whistles) and the lower end of the broadband echolocation click frequencies used by most dolphin species. Higher frequency whistles, some whistle harmonics and the peak energies and upper frequencies of the clicks could not be recorded on this equipment; much more specialised (and costly) recording gear would have been needed.

I arrived in Lubango in Angola on 10 January 2008, where my three bags of equipment caused considerable consternation at the customs baggage check. Apparently I should have had receipts/invoices to show for every electrical item I brought into the country, but no-one had mentioned this during planning. Given my vast array of electronics, lack of Portuguese and the fact that the officials had never previously encountered a British woman coming alone to Angola to study dolphins, it took some time to establish that everything was legitimate and finally, to my relief, be waved through. I was driven for four hours through a spectacular landscape to the coast, where we proceeded along the beach to the lodge, passing the tracks of nesting turtles and constant wreckage of sun-bleached ribs and skulls from long-dead whales. The lodge was located at the bottom of cliffs on a long stretch of deserted coast, and I had a cabin that opened directly onto the beach and benefitted from the constant soothing sound of breaking surf. Flamingos, ospreys, turtles, Cape fur seals and jackals were all present on my doorstep, and I soon discovered that I could also watch four cetacean species from my cabin, including the much-anticipated Atlantic humpback dolphins.

Room with a view. My cabin at the fishing lodge in Namibe Province looked directly over the remote coastline and ocean and was perfect for spotting dolphins.

I was a little apprehensive about my first boat survey the next morning. The 5 m rigid-hulled inflatable boat seemed small and flimsy on the South Atlantic swell. The boat had to be launched and retrieved directly from the beach with careful timing between the breaking waves by a small team of locals, some of whom were afraid of the water! Consequently, the boat was constantly full of seawater, sand and diesel, which do not mix well with electronics.

My camera gear and digital recorder were housed in a waterproof Pelicase, but it was impossible to keep them completely free from these hazards while working. To my great delight we encountered a humpback dolphin on the very first survey, a distinctive animal with a chopped-off dorsal fin which appeared enigmatically from the front of a wave and disappeared shortly after.

The following day I had my first boat encounter with a larger group of humpback dolphins. Six animals were present, and these were to form my core study group throughout the remainder of the research project. Photo-identification of their dorsal fins was always the first priority when sighting dolphins, since this tool provided crucial information regarding the number of animals and movements/behaviour of individuals. My first few hydrophone deployments that morning proved to be a steep learning curve. The dolphins alternated between travelling closely along the shore, and foraging in sheltered areas in bays and behind reef breaks. It was problematic to approach them closely due to the dangers from shallow reef and the large swell waves that broke unpredictably along the coast. Because the engine noise from the boat would drown out any dolphin sounds, we needed to be able to stop the boat in a safe position and switch off the engines in order to make recordings.

The first few occasions of dropping the hydrophone into the water were trial and error. Initially the cable floated at the surface and did not sink to sufficient depth. We taped some shackles to the cable just above the hydrophone element which succeeded in sinking it deeper in the water column. Several attempts at deploying the hydrophone early on failed because the waves washed us too quickly towards the coast and we had to suddenly restart the engine and move out from the surf zone. When we did manage to get the hydrophone in the water, I was surprised at how noisy the near-shore environment was.

There was continuous masking at frequencies lower than 4 kHz from the surf breaking along the beach, and persistent broadband sounds produced by shrimp and other invertebrates living along the reef. Additionally, if there was any chop at all on the sea surface then the recordings were affected by surface water noise and the sloshing of water against the boat's side. The dolphins often inhabited very shallow depths of <5 m, and several times I over-estimated the water depth and realised the hydrophone was sitting on the seabed (fortunately in sandy areas which didn't cause damage).

The scant available information regarding the behaviour of Atlantic humpback dolphin and the closely related Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (*Sousa chinensis*), was that these species are generally shy and wary around boats. During the time I spent in southern Angola working with Atlantic humpback dolphins, the animals did not choose to interact with our boat, and nor did they particularly like to be approached. Sometimes, if we had to suddenly speed up or switch on the engine to escape swell waves, they would clearly show an avoidance response to the boat.

However, I found that as my understanding of their, rather predictable, habits increased, it became possible to work with them in ways that did not obviously disturb their behaviour. For the hydrophone deployments I quickly learnt that it was futile to deploy the hydrophone at distances greater than a few hundred metres from the animals, since their sounds would simply be masked by surf and reef noise. Furthermore, positioning the boat abeam of the animals was rarely productive, since they would not be orientated towards the hydrophone (and echolocation clicks are directional) and the swell would quickly wash the drifting boat towards shore and into the danger zone. The best opportunities for recording sounds were when the animals were travelling steadily along a stretch of coast and we could manoeuvre the boat in a wide arc around them and into their predicted path and then stop the engine while still well ahead of them. As long as we sat very quietly in the boat, the dolphins would frequently pass within a few metres of the hydrophone.

Careful manoeuvring of the boat and patience led to some close encounters with the dolphins.

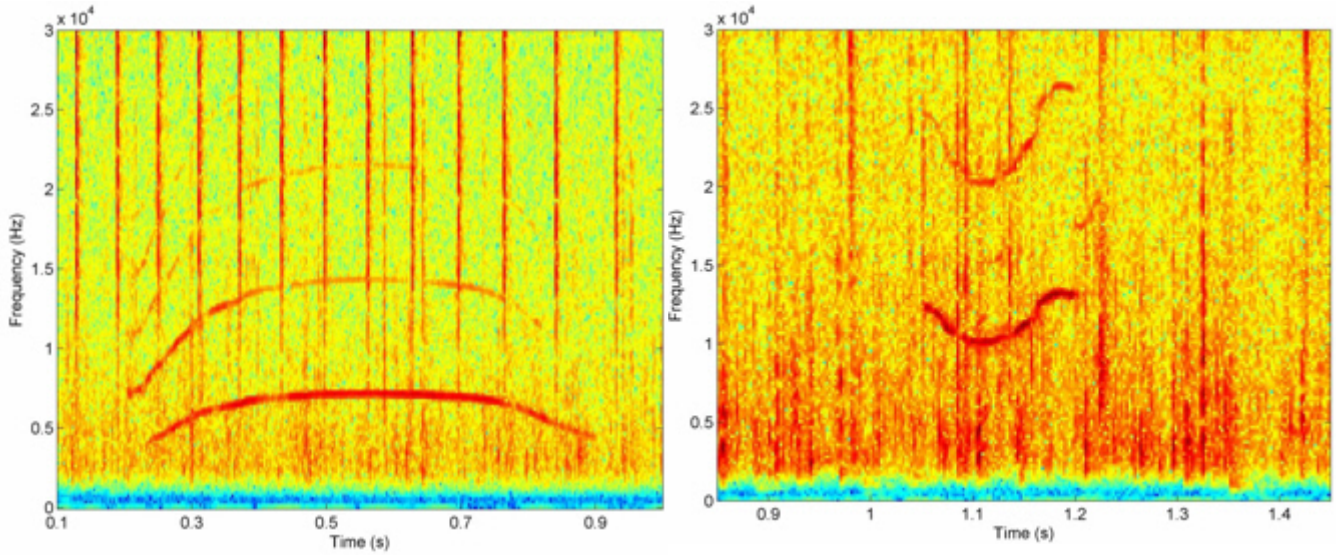
The first time I heard the dolphins vocalising was a fantastic moment. We had stopped the boat ahead of the study group in a quiet location where the beach changed into cliffs and there was less ambient noise from surf than usual. I had quickly put the hydrophone in the water and started the recording while they were still a few hundred metres away. As they swam towards us I could hear steady echolocation clicks, and then a short sequence of whistles. Suddenly the camp's dachshund, who had accompanied us in the boat for the survey, spotted the dolphins and proceeded to bark with gusto at every surfacing animal. The remainder of the recording was spoilt by barking and the dog leaping all over my equipment as it tried to reach the dolphins. However, I had recorded some sounds, the first ever acoustic data for this species, and I was ecstatic.

Over the remainder of the January trip I made around 3 hr of recordings, usually in small files of around 4 min duration as the animals passed closest to the boat. I returned to Namibe Province with my hydrophone in June 2008, with the aims of collecting winter data on the dolphins and adding to my acoustic data. However, during the first deployment of the hydrophone amid a large pod of bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*), we noticed smoke billowing from the boat engine. It was on fire! A hasty bucket of seawater dealt the worst of the heat, and an improvised pull-start mechanism with a lifejacket strap got the engine running sufficiently to avoid being washed ashore and to limp slowly back to camp. Our boat was out of action for the remainder of the three-week survey while awaiting replacement parts from South Africa, and no more hydrophone deployments were possible. Such are the frustrations arising from the logistical challenges of working in remote areas.

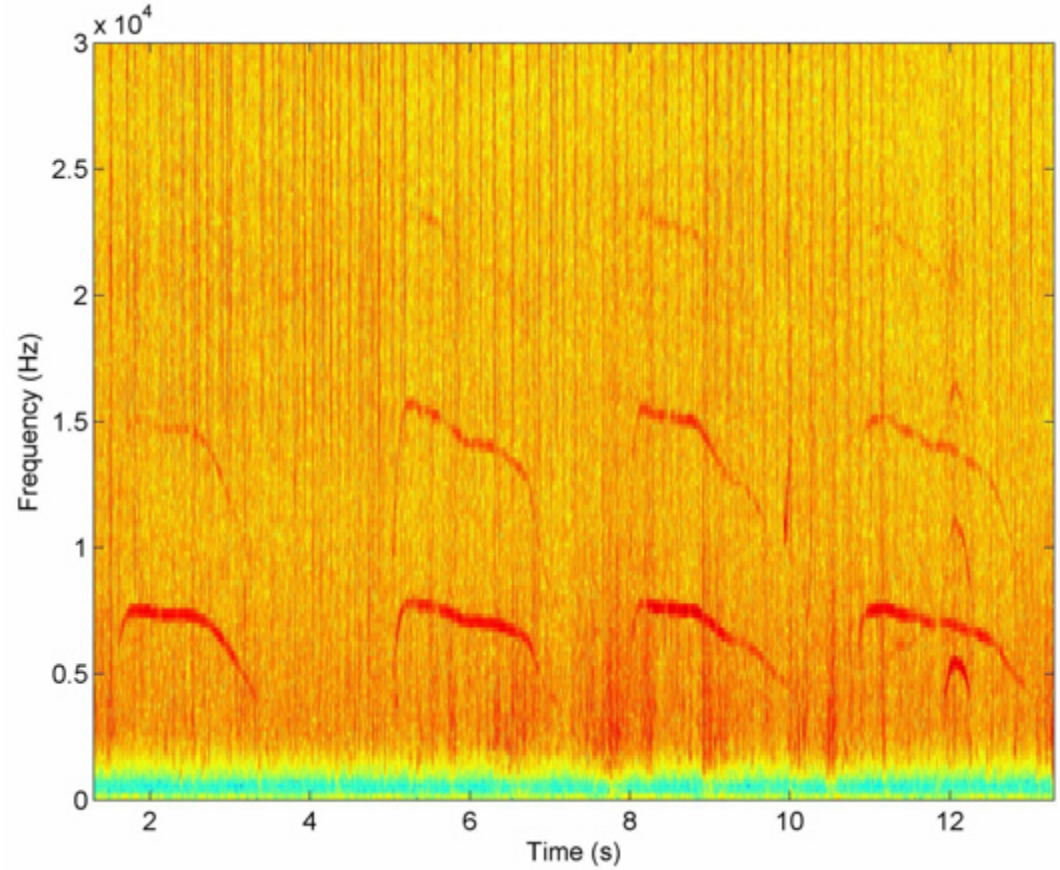
The acoustic data analysis was carried out using CoolEdit 2000 (Syntrillium) to initially examine the spectrograms and extract individual dolphin whistles and click trains. Files containing vocalisations were then imported into Matlab (The Mathworks, Inc.) for signal processing analysis. A digital high-pass filter (2 kHz) was applied to reduce the masking from breaking surf, reef fauna and surface-water noise. I had recorded almost 300 dolphin whistles in the field, and around 1/3 of those were of sufficient signal-to-noise ration quality for analysis.

I discovered that the whistles produced by Atlantic humpback dolphins were primarily simple in structure and of relatively low fundamental frequency (averaging 4.8 and 8.2 kHz for minimum and maximum frequency respectively) when compared with many other oceanic dolphin species. Some other coastal and freshwater dolphin species that inhabit similar noisy, shallow, turbid habitats also produce whistles of particularly low and narrow frequency range, likely because lower frequencies have better refractive properties in these environments. However, many of the whistles included harmonic components that extended beyond the 44 kHz analysis bandwidth, and it is possible that these higher frequencies also contain information used by the dolphins.

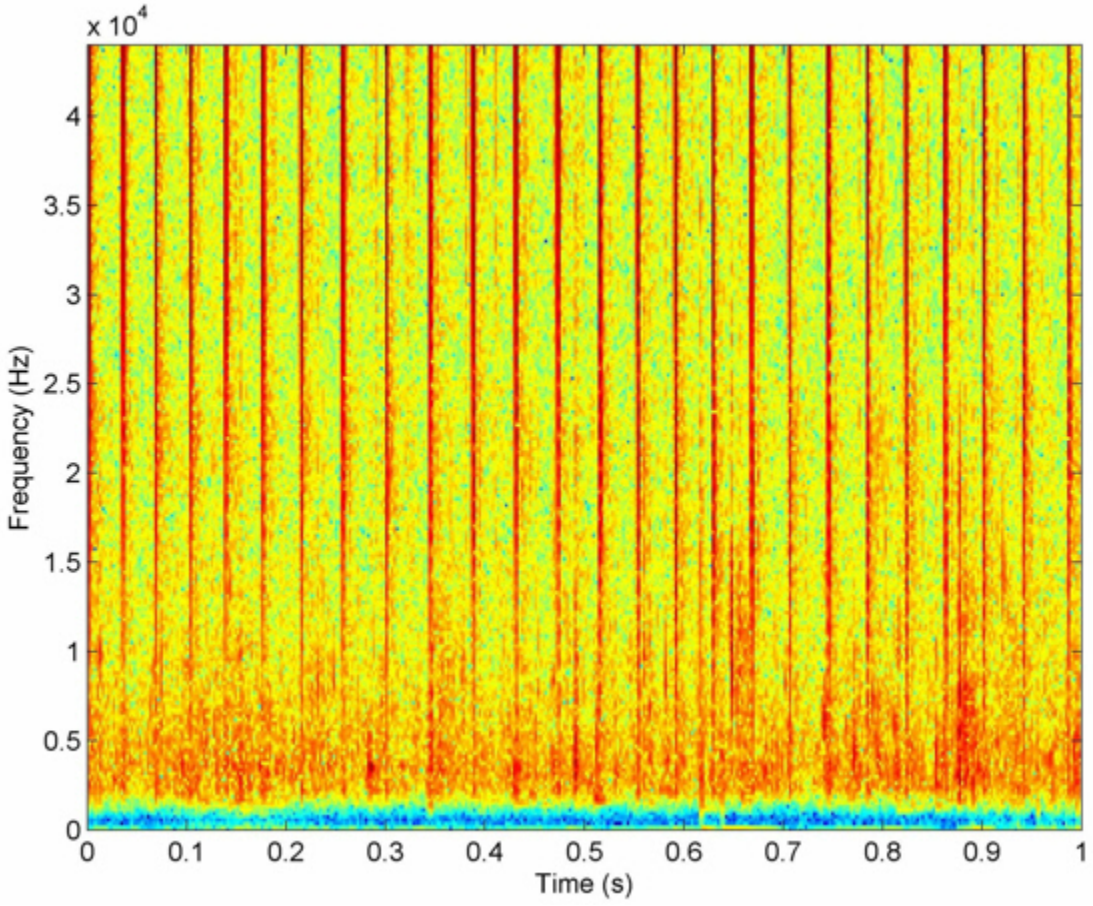
The whistles were also simple in structure, and 85% had a single inflection point. Usually the whistles were either a simple convex (42.9% of whistles) or concave (22.2% of whistles) shape. These two whistle types had similar start and end frequencies, but with the maximum frequency (convex) or minimum frequency (concave) situated towards the midpoint of the whistle axis.

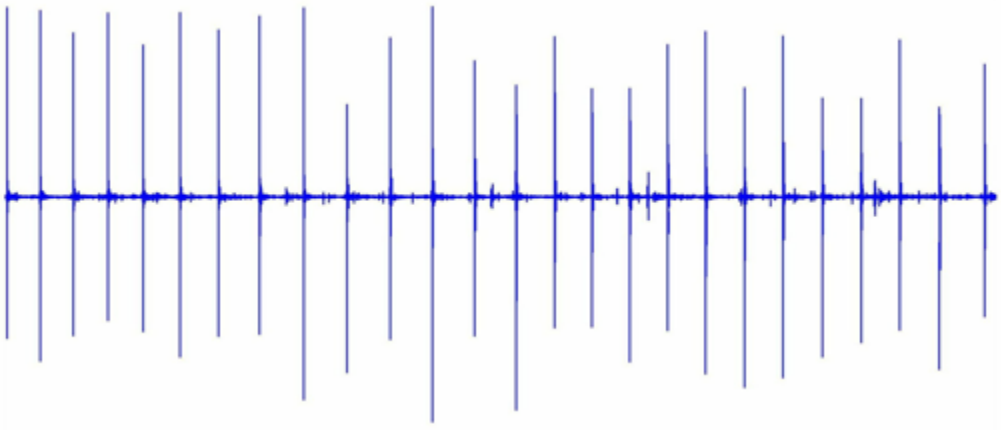


Spectrograms of filtered convex (left) and concave (right) humpback dolphin whistles (broadband click trains are also visible in the spectrograms). Both whistles have harmonics extending into higher frequencies.



Sequence of four convex Atlantic humpback dolphin whistles with similar duration, structure, harmonics and spacing (~3.0 s) between the start points of each whistle. Broadband click trains are also visible in the spectrogram.





The spectrogram (previous page bottom) and waveform (above) of a typical click train showing a regular pattern of clicks and a repetition rate of 25.4 clicks/s.

The click trains emitted by Atlantic humpback dolphins had energy throughout the recorded frequency range but with highest energy levels towards the 44 kHz upper frequency limit of the recording equipment. Click repetition rates were variable, and dolphins tended to emit clicks at lower repetition rate when travelling (mean repetition rate of 26 clicks/s) than when foraging or capturing fish (mean repetition rate of 68 clicks/s). Presumably, travel behaviour required only regular clicks for navigational purposes, whereas the detection and pursuit of prey required higher click production. Dolphins also occasionally emitted short bursts of clicks at much higher repetition rates (mean repetition rate of 256 clicks/s), some of which sounded like creaks or tonal to the human ear.

While these initial recordings provided useful information on the acoustic parameters used by Atlantic humpback dolphins in Angola, I hope in the future to collect data from other dolphin groups located elsewhere in West Africa in order to further characterise the sounds produced by this interesting species.

Further reading:

Weir, C.R. (2010). First description of Atlantic humpback dolphin (*Sousa teuszii*) whistles, recorded off Angola. *Bioacoustics*, 19: 211-224.

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Letters to the Editor

Cuba Revisited

Simon Elliott

I was interested to read John Paterson's account of his disappointing visit to Cuba in the Spring 2012 edition; his experience was very different from ours.

My wife and I travelled there in 2009, keeping us both happy with our usual combination trip of wildlife watching, recording and a holiday in a hot sunny location. We also made it coincide with one truly memorable day, when we joined several hundred thousand joyful Cubans in the May Day parade through Havana on the 50th anniversary of the Revolution.

John was indeed brave to hire his own car – there are no road signs that I saw, other than the ubiquitous political slogans. But we travelled around the island by taxi and by public transport – the Cuban long distance buses being fast, comfortable and more punctual than the usual British experience.

We stayed in hotels that, yes, often had dubious plumbing, but which were perfectly comfortable, but more often we stayed with local families in 'casas particulares'; we were met, both in Havana and in the countryside, by nothing but great friendliness, assistance and interest in the outside world (though ability to speak some Spanish does help a lot).

Yes, one occasionally felt ripped off by the currency exchanges, but little more than in many other parts of the world that we've visited, and of course most Cubans, particularly in the rural areas, are very poor indeed.

And in Viñales, in a superb recording location among the mogotes, reached by a cheap local bus, I did manage to get a distant recording of the Cuban Solitaire.

So please don't be put off – Cuba is still one of the most fascinating places in the world, with some great bird watching and lovely people. Just go before the Americans get there!

My thoughts on the AGM July 2012

Phil Rudkin

I consider this AGM was one of the best in recent years. The whole day was full of interest, and the sound factor was tremendous, i.e. Jez Riley's presentation, the Sound Quiz, and the Competition entries. The playbacks were a full and fascinating example of members' recordings from all parts of the world. Furthermore, the AGM business did not drag on. Our chairman's opening address was concise and interesting.

Alan's appeal for more of the new members to get involved with the WSRS activities was very well presented. This brings me to a relevant point: sadly, the attendance at Cottesmore had dropped to an all-time low for a WSRS AGM, at a total of 31. However, it proved Alan's point. I made some notes of who was there. 20 (including committee) were the long-standing members. Eleven (including committee) were recent members.

I personally was delighted (being a long standing member), to meet up with old and good friends, we enjoyed talking about our adventures together in the past. I feel that the committee and officers are doing their very best to encourage new members, so I felt for them on this day.

Terry Barnatt and I were pleased that the meeting was held again at Cottesmore, near to where we both live. But, I am full of praise for those who had to travel long distances to attend.

My final quote; on this day at the WSRS AGM the attendance was quality, not quantity!

Phil Rudkin, 30th July 2012

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A Neophobic Rat ?

Gordon Edgar

It was early evening on 7th Oct 2010 when I ran a rig recording full-spectrum audio and ultrasound 'direct'. The bandwidth covered was from 50Hz-65kHz.

I was monitoring bats and I expected plenty of activity in their courtship and mating season.

Later, back in the studio, I found that I had also recorded an unrecognised 'biological' as shown in the sonograms. The mystery signal lasted 43 seconds including a couple of short pauses and comprised a long series of similar units.

The original colour versions of the sonograms are more revealing carrying more amplitude information. That said, the gain structure of the pulses is uniform at about 21kHz, in contrast to typical wider-band FM pulses from bats.

Sound pressure waves emitted by the 'aerial hawker' bats are very high at source, although short wave lengths attenuate rapidly, according to the inverse square law of physics. On my sonograms, despite a recorded peak amplitude of only –24dB, some units show slight overload distortion, presumably because of limitations in the dynamic range of my A/D converters.

Looking at my sonograms, I surmise that the pressure waves in question would not have propagated far and accordingly, I think my subject was static and calling at close range.

My rig was set by a bridge, as shown in the photo and I suspect a Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus,* alarming at my equipment. That said, presumably other common species would be nearby.

It is known that various small mammals produce Ultrasonic Vocalisations (USVs) and their utterances have been studied with captive animals in laboratory settings. However, I doubt if many USVs have been captured in the wild and my sonograms do not match any reference samples available to me.

I reiterate that my suspicion of a 'neophobic' Brown Rat is speculation and if you recognise these calls, I would like to hear from you.

References:

Wilson D.R. and Hare J.F. *Ground Squirrel uses ultrasonic alarms.* Nature 430:523 (2004)

Sales G.D. *Ultrasonic Communication in Rodents.* Wildlife Sound Vol 8, No 6 (Autumn 1999)

Gordon Edgar *Ultrasonic recording with the WM-61 capsule.* Wildlife Sound Vol 11, No 7 (Spring 2010)

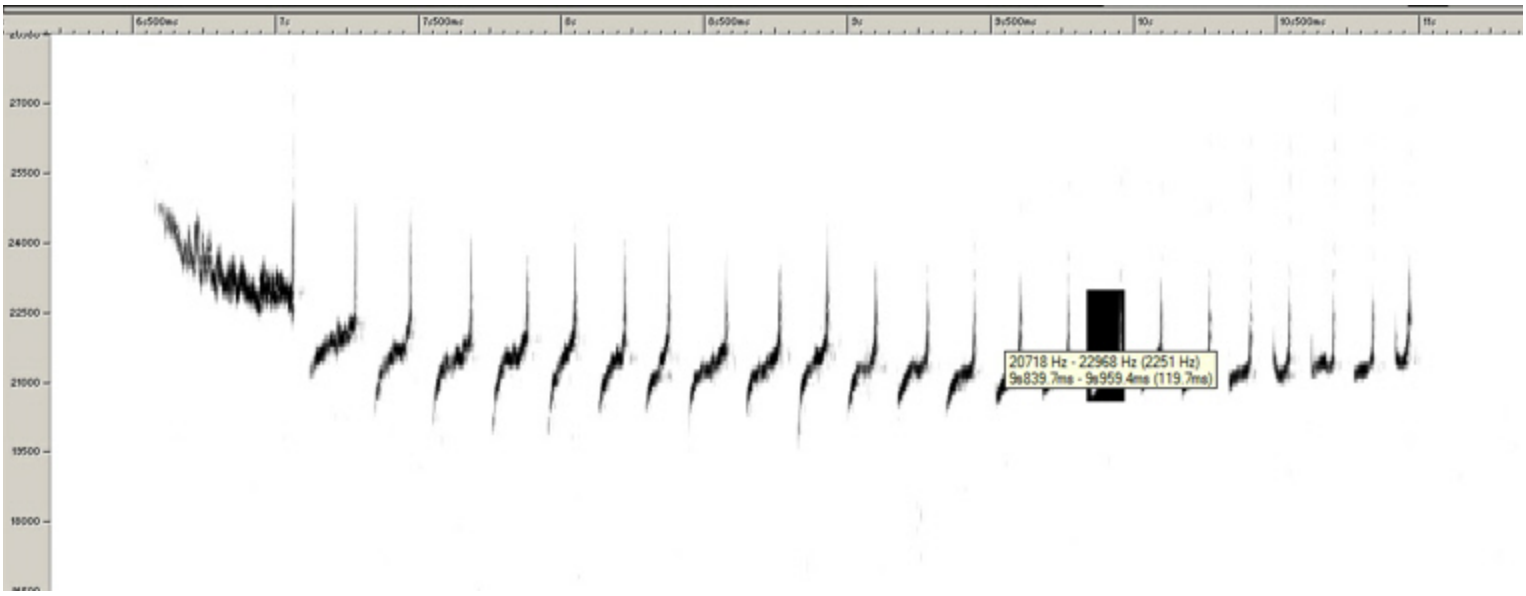

Fig i The opening sequence, showing frequency parameters of a single unit.

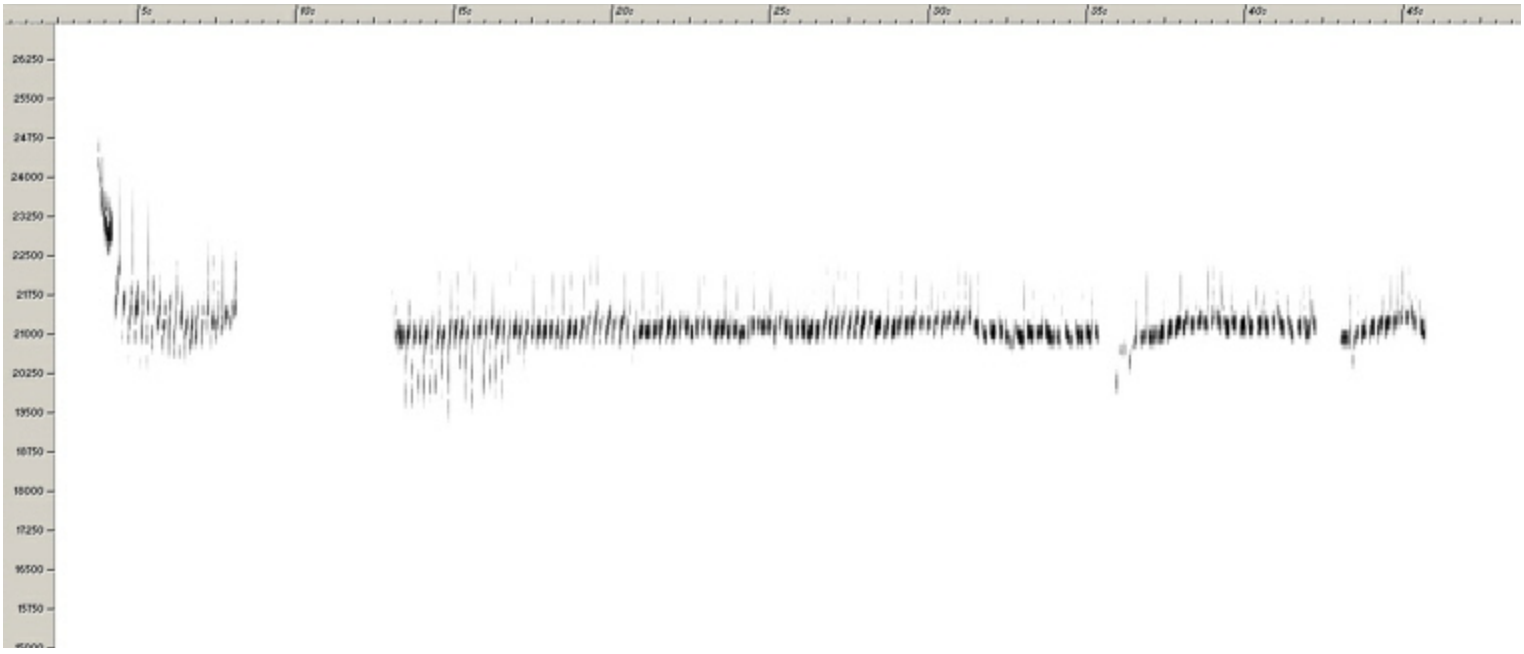

Fig ii The entire 43-second sequence, including pauses.

AGM and Members' Day Cottesmore July 2012

Andy Freeth

It was a warm and sunny morning as Ann Yates, Jean Clamp and I arrived at Cottesmore, ready for another members' day. This is the second time that the WSRS has used the village hall near Oakham in the county of Rutland. The Society's plan has been to move the AGM around the country to make it more accessible to members, so it was gratifying to see some new faces amongst the regulars.

As usual, several members had already got settled in the kitchen, a place for coffee making, biscuit nibbling and most importantly, chatting! These events are a fantastic opportunity to learn about equipment and techniques, plus a chance to catch up with Society business.

The AGM proper began at 11:15 with a welcoming speech from our new Chairman, Alan Burbidge, illustrated with a Powerpoint presentation… very snazzy! Alan explained that Geoff Sample would be standing down as the Sound Magazine Editor, but that a worthy successor had been located in John Paterson. We are very pleased to welcome John on board the committee. Please offer him your support by keeping his sound vault regularly topped up with your recordings.

We also welcome Nick Davison, who is our second OWP and has already become involved in getting the society better recognised by the general public. His plans for a collaboration with the WWT appear elsewhere in this Journal.

Amongst the items for discussion was a proposed change in the subscription for members, prompted mainly by the sudden and hefty rises in the cost of postage, especially overseas.

The business part of the meeting was concluded in time for an early lunch. Several members enjoyed the sunshine and "partied" in the grounds of the village hall with their picnics, whilst others patronised the local public house.

Refreshed and fed, the membership assembled again ready for the afternoon presentation from Jez riley French. Jez is a recordist and composer who has a different slant on recording to most, using hydrophones and contact microphones to record the world around us. His demonstrations of whistling fence wires and warbling computers was a breath of fresh air, which appealed to the creative part of every wildlife recordist's soul. Jez also manufactures affordable hydrophones and contact mics and the selection he had for sale got snapped up very quickly!

The afternoon continued with the Competition replay session and prize awards. Thanks to everyone who took the time to enter, the standard was very high.

A raffle and sound quiz closed the afternoon, with everyone having a great time. Thanks to the committee for organising another successful AGM.

Enjoying the sunshine!

Jean Nancy and Mike relaxing

Ian Brady demonstrating his electret microphones in a reflector

WSRS Competition results 2011 and prize presentations

Individual Class

Winner
Tooth-billed Catbird — John Paterson

Second
Marsh Warbler 1 — Bernd Eggert

Restricted Winner
White-crowned Penduline Tit — Patrick Franke

Restricted Second
Skokholm Sedge Warbler — Nick Davison

Species Class

Winner
Black Grouse — Martin Garnett

Second
Croasdale Frogs — Roger Boughton

Restricted Winner
Urban Foxes — Richard Beard

Restricted Second
Mumbles Pier Kittiwakes — Nick Davison

Combination Class

Winner
Fire-bellied Toads and House Sparrows — Bernd Eggert

Second
Feathered Mastersingers — Patrick Franke

Restricted Winner
Frog Chorus — Richard Beard

No restricted Second

Habitat Class

Winner
North Queensland Rainforest — John Paterson

Second
Plantation Dawn — Simon Elliott

Restricted Winner
Galicica High Pasture — Robert Malpas

No Restricted Second

Creative Class

Winner
Caerlaverock December 2011 — Allan Haighton

Second
By a Billabong — John Paterson

Restricted Winner
Kittlitz Soundscape — Lasse-Marc Riek

No Restricted Second

Fieldcraft Award

Swinhoe's Snipe Display at Kazakh Actai — Patrick Franke

Non-Avian Award

Dingo's at Night — Tony Baylis

Silver Fox

Black Grouse — Martin Garnett

John Paterson Individual Class Winner

Martin Garnett Species Class Winner

Patrick Franke receiving the Boughton Fieldcraft Award

Nick Davison Species Class Restricted Second

"Close Up"

Simon Elliott

You may be new to wildlife sound recording. You've bought a recorder and at least one microphone. If you're not into soundscapes, quickly you realise one fact: everything is calling a long, long way away. You look at the photographers, you realise that to get the call you want you need the equivalent of a telephoto or a zoom lens, and so you save up and add a gun mic or a parabolic reflector to your kit. Even then, you won't always be satisfied, and hopefully you will find that there is another way which I would urge you to try, and one that's not new. To quote the late, great Ludwig Koch speaking in the 1930s (to be read in his infamous German accent):

"I have been trying to capture zee songs of English birds zis spring. It has not been an easy job. You have first of all to erect your microphones, zen lay your cables zru zee woods and trees a mile or so avay, and sit down, and wait from zree o'clock in zee morning, til after daybreak. Zat may sound simple enough…."

So instead of using a reflector, get your mic close to the subject, and think of a good length of cable as your zoom lens, pulling the sounds into your recorder from a surprisingly long way away. I've never used a mile of cable, but I regularly use hundreds of metres. The results are well worth the effort.

There is nothing I like better in wildlife sound recording than observing a bird carrying food in its bill, seeing birds going to a regular site for feeding or roosting, or merely identifying a regular and accessible song-post. Then I know that my activities for the next few days or weeks are mapped out. A bit of careful observation, careful planning, then rigging the site (and being lucky with the weather) and successful close-up recordings will follow – eventually…

So what are the advantages? Firstly, signal-to-noise ratio (S/NR). By being close to the subject, you can increase the S/NR dramatically, leaving you with a clean recording of the subject, and substantially reduced background noise, be that natural (wind, water), or man-made. By close, personally I like to get VERY close up (or 'BCU' in the trade); I have recorded most of the vocabulary of the Kittiwake within a few centimetres, and the heartbeats of several species, including wild Golden Eagles; and when you're this close, the effect can be dramatic. I was once told that my recordings of a female Osprey standing on the nest, astride my mic, defeated the automatic copying system at the British Library – the intervals between her calls being so quiet that the machine registered them as silence. For me, that's what's now known as a 'result'!

Secondly, you are likely to be recording sounds that are impossible to hear from a distance, even with a reflector, and many may be unknown to science. What better than to record the intimate calls of two animals talking to each other at close range, as they intend their 'conversation' to be heard, rather than from the human perspective at a distance? And the very nature of this technique means that you will almost certainly have enforced long waits, during which you will be concentrating on observing the behaviour of your subjects and become absorbed in experiencing your surroundings – so much better than the mobile 'point-and-shoot' technique so often used with reflector recording. Perhaps this is proven by one of the greatest exponents of open mic/long cable recording in the UK, Philip Radford – his well-known and prodigious contributions to the British Birds 'Notes' pages over many years are surely the results of many, many hours of forced observation of bird behaviour while sitting, fingers poised over his trusty UHER.

EQUIPMENT

There is one essential component that you need in your system before you start laying cable in the great outdoors – balanced mic inputs. Most recorders have them now, but if you use an unbalanced input, for example the standard 3.5mm jack on smaller recorders, you'll soon be listening to all sorts of hums and crackles, and most likely BBC Radio 4, Radio Moscow and a local taxi firm thrown in. These effects are especially noticeable in the atmospheric conditions around dawn.

If you choose to use a dynamic mic (see below) you don't need to buy an expensive box like a mixer to do this, because there are relatively low cost transformer-based in-line balanced-to-unbalanced converters that will do the job for you. It should go without saying that at the other end, your chosen mic must provide a balanced output, and you need a balanced mic cable – this has a minimum of 3 wires: 2 'live' and one ground.

It gets a bit more complicated if you are using powered mics, but other articles are available on the WSRS website and in the old Journals to help you out with this. For instance, my own review of the Sound Devices 302 explains why I have tended to use a field mixer for many years. A mixer provides a great deal of flexibility for close-up recording, and there are several suitable devices on the market, but even simple in-line pre-amps can provide all you need for a balanced powered system. Many WSRS members make their own.

FIELDCRAFT

Before exploring the equipment further, we should concentrate on the importance of fieldcraft when embarking on close-ups. Although it is possible to place a mic with zero disturbance (e.g. placing it on a Fulmar's ledge while the bird is away at sea, or at a regular feeding site while the subject is elsewhere) there is almost always an element of disturbance with this technique, but there are ways to minimise this.

Remember: MINIMAL DISTURBANCE OF THE SUBJECT IS PARAMOUNT.

It's a somewhat useless teaching aid, but experience will tell you just how far you can go with each subject. I've worked my way up from close-up recording of common

garden species as an inexperienced teenager in the 1960s (like putting a mic inside a turkey carcass at Christmas for the starlings), to rigging up Goshawk nests high in a larch tree or Turnstone feeding sites on a windswept beach today. Basically I follow three rules:

1. Observe
2. Plan
3. Execute

Observation, sometimes over years rather than hours, will tell you how the subject behaves and where to place the mics for maximum effect. Planning can take account of all manner of things, from best wind direction, tides, where and how to place a hide, to liasing with a farmer or landowner, or getting all the appropriate legal and access paperwork sorted. Execution is the fun bit, and it's much smoother if #1 and #2 have been done properly.

I like to work from my own hide; frequently this is my car, which has the added benefit of comfort and powering, and my 4x4 gets me that little bit further into the places I want to be. Hides can be purchased: I have a vintage 1970s Fensman, and a very portable camouflaged mini-dome hide which can be erected in less than 5 minutes.

Given the opportunity I often use natural materials to build a temporary hide, and a few pieces of scrim netting work wonders at making you and your gear disappear in seconds. I also always carry a dark umbrella! Very useful, not just for keeping you dry, but it works really well as an instant hide, above or in front of you.

Remember the law, in whatever country you are working. In the UK, I have worked with the licensing authorities in England and Scotland to establish guidelines for recording Schedule One bird species. You don't actually get a licence to record, but to 'disturb', which is terminology that I quite like – it makes you think even more carefully about what you're doing.

And these days you're unlikely to be granted a disturbance licence unless there's a good chance that you're going to add something to the world of science. But don't be put off. Most close-up recordings, i.e. away from the nest or breeding territory, can be made without any infringement of legislation; all you need is a bit of imagination, and awareness that you can do things differently.

MICROPHONES

The great thing about close-ups is that you can use almost any mic in your possession, but some are definitely better than others. Since I am usually BCU, I tend to work in mono for these projects. One important factor is how long you think they are going to be left in place.
On this basis I would classify mics as:

Buzzbar rod support with spaced pair

Short stay: a few hours to possibly a couple of days, in good weather.

Long stay: several days to several years, obviously weather-proofed.

Earlier I mentioned dynamic mics. These are often frowned upon these days because they may have a poorer S/NR than the latest powered mics, and they also tend to be larger and heavier. But frequently they are ideal for close-ups – generally much cheaper, and very robust. I have left them exposed to the elements up trees or on cliffs for years at a time, and they can still work perfectly.

As for powered mics, T-powering is robust but harder to find now, and most of you will have phantom-powered P48 systems. The latest P48 mics appear to be more robust for long stay work than some of their predecessors. But be warned – an expensive, superb quality studio mic may well become completely and permanently useless in the pre-dawn mist or a rainstorm.

Perhaps the most important factors in choosing a close-up mic for wildlife are size and directional characteristics. If you're trying to record a Chiffchaff at the nest, you're unlikely to succeed by stuffing a long gun mic through the grass. For short stay work I usually use small P48 tie-clip mics, that can go almost anywhere, but I use larger mics, preferably dynamics, in weatherproofed shields for long stay projects such as raptor work. Often I go up to a short gun when local factors demand, e.g. with roosting waders, or once I was recording Long-eared Owls at the nest and could only fix the mic to an adjacent tree top a couple of metres away.

Directional characteristics are very important. Omnis will give a less coloured sound, and significantly are less prone to handling, or rather footfall effects, when your subject lands on or near the mic. And of course, they are omnidirectional – placement is a bit less critical. Even so, my WSRS prize-winning Sedge Warbler recording in 2009 was very nearly not successful; by striving to get as close as possible, many takes were ruined by the bird perching directly on the mic.

I'll use a cardioid when I need to up the S/NR because of local physical factors around the subject, but not too close. Cardioids suffer from a proximity effect (so-called bass tip-up) which will colour the recording with too much low frequency, and are much more likely to suffer from footfall noises. Once at a Common Buzzard nest, the youngster kept plodding around next to the mic and ruining the recordings, and so I had to make a second perilous climb up a rotten pine tree to reposition the Beyer M88 out of harms way. The M88 has a high output but a very strong bass response and was probably the wrong mic for this job in the first place.

Which mics do I use and why? Here's my current and very personal shortlist:

<u>SONY ECM series (50 or 55):</u>
Omni tie-clip P48; cheap second-hand so almost disposable, so these are my preferred option when working above or close to water. Short stay.

<u>DPA4060:</u>
Omni tie-clip P48; tiny; high quality and SPL/SNR; minimal handling/footfall noise; expensive, so not near water! Short stay.

Cable supported over water

AUDIOTECHNICA AT804:
Omni dynamic; robust; reasonable S/NR. Relatively cheap. Long stay.

BEYER M88:
Hypercardioid dynamic; high output; lovely rich sound, but prone to bass tip-up. Indestructible and high SPL (originally developed way back in 1961 as a mic to place inside a bass drum!) Long stay.

OTHERS:
I've tried all sorts, including the old AKG D190 (cardioid, dynamic but low output; long stay), SENNHEISER MKH405, 406, 40 (cardioid; high output; short stay) and SENNHEISER MKH416 and MKH60 (short gun, hyper-cardioid; short stay).

I'm looking forward to trying my new SENNHEISER MKH8020 for close-ups this year. This small, high output omni should be ideal.

This is just a short look into a few of the benefits and techniques of close-up recording. I hope that over the years my recordings have shown just how successful it can be. Leave your reflector at home, and go out with just a mic and a reasonable length (e.g. 50m) of cable.

You'll be forced to look at the countryside and your subjects in a different way, you'll probably learn a lot more about their behaviour, and hopefully you'll discover that this is a satisfying and cost-effective way to 'zoom' in to those special sounds.

Sony Tie-Clip with Fulmars

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WSRS Regalia and Equipment Sales

The Society has a number of regalia items for sale. Although I'm sure that many members have moved over to digital recording and editing, the tapes that are for sale here offer significant savings on their original prices.

There are still a few T shirts and head scarfs which I'll detail on the web-site advert page at a future date. We also have some car stickers, and men's ties plus the odd sweatshirt, though most are small sized I'm afraid!

If you are looking for a parabolic reflector at the moment (and not decided to abandon the idea in favour of a close up mic technique!) then the Society has the last of the 22" ABS dishes that we purchased. This is an easy way to get started with the modest investment in a mic and dish.

In all instances, enquiries should be directed to Alan Burbidge for the dishes and sales items.

Andy

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The Snarl of the Taiga

David Moon

One of my favourite coastal soundscapes is the rhythmic clicking of sheets against masts, the creaks and squeaks of craft shackled to their stations, with the plaintive cries of gulls surfing the breeze. Add the warmth of a summer sunset and it feels like a holiday. So I was surprised to find myself mentally tutting at a flag pole tapping enthusiastically over my pristine recording of arctic terns fishing just off shore. When the environment is so unusually quiet, even some of the uplifting sounds are an intrusion.

I was one of twenty participants on the Wildeye Sound Recording trip to, Ängskärs, Sweden, 60° 28‘ 35”, N 18° 04‘ 17” E, which, if you don’t have an atlas handy, is about two hours NE of Stockholm on the Baltic coast. This is a low altitude region of taiga, or boreal forest, consisting mainly of conifer and birch, granite boulders, tannic pools, moss and lichens in pastel grey, green and yellow. The winters are cold and, by the number of summer houses, I guess the summers must be rather fine. About half of the group were from the computer gaming industry, the other half from film, media, conservation and enthusiastic amateurs, such as myself.

Piers Warren, Director of Wildeye, had been asked to run a course in Sweden by Stockholm-based participants at a previous wildlife sound recording workshop; they were both employed in the computer game industry and predicted, rightly as it turned out, that there would be sufficient interest from local participants to make the course worthwhile, perhaps drawn by the location or the opportunity to draw on the experience of Chris Watson and Jez riley French. It was fully booked in days, six months in advance.

As anyone new to sound recording knows there is a bewildering choice of components to choose from to make each of the links in the recording chain. So, being a relative newcomer, and one even whose mind slips quickly into an equivalent of a rabbit caught in headlights at a low threshold of technical detail, my sound bag is populated as a result of blind faith in the opinion of gurus, lucky secondhand buys, a desire not to compromise on quality and budget constraint that requires that I should.

This was my fourth Wildeye course so I knew that a gathering of twenty sound enthusiasts, many with full-on field expeditions under their belts, provided a great opportunity to see kit that I had only read about, as well as learn handling techniques from people already practiced at using them. Among the brands present: DPA, Edirol, Fostex, Olympus, Marantz, Neumann, Sanken, Schoeps, Sennheiser, Sonosax, Sound Devices, Sony, Telinga, Zaxcom and Zoom.

My interest in wildlife sound recording perhaps mirrors my eclectic taste in music: pretty much anything interests my ear. Birds, insects, wind, machinery and so on, each have their own song. I am coming to realise that this open, even haphazard, approach should be tempered with more focus and intention if I’m ever to get ‘better’ at wildscape recording.

Living in a city may have heightened my ability to automatically tune sounds out. Hearing seems passive and indiscriminate, and I am becoming increasingly aware that I need to make an effort to listen carefully. A microphone, or other audio transducer, helps me to navigate sound and perceive more clearly, and I think this helps train my naked ears and mind to do their job. This probably says more about the way I make sense of sound than anything generally applicable, but I’m sure it’s true of a few people. One of the other benefits of meeting with other sound enthusiasts is the chance to listen through the ears of others at the play-back sessions to what others have found interesting to record.

The flight was delayed leaving, so we landed late. The Swedish contingent, smiling nevertheless, were waiting for us with three shiny minibuses. After mostly day trips in the car, where it is easy to cover the back seat in cables and bags, I was alarmed at how heavy and bulky my recording kit was when attempting to wrap it in two suitcases.

I had limited myself considerably from my initial pack list, so somewhat embarrassed to find that even then I had brought nearly double that of others. Somehow, we managed to get all the boots closed and got on our way. First stop: stocking-up on things that are bad for us at a) a supermarket and b) a liquor store. After an hour of motorway strip, passing Uppsala, we turned onto what we’d regard as ‘A’ road, through a few quiet towns linked by forest and farm and, tempting though it was to floor it, local wisdom says that elk vs car is something best avoided.

Our base was Ängskärsgården, which consists of a communal dining room and lounge, with shared dorms and bathrooms located in the adjoining cabins, all painted in the red-oxide and white paint typical of the area. Accommodation was simple, clean, and comfortable. The water had a brown tinge and a faint aroma of damp wool, but the locals drink it and grow strong, tall and healthy, and it did the job of replenishing our thirst and washing us down.

We arrived in a half-hearted grey sheet of cloud, the sun making a weak attempt at cheering up the sky. The forecast was for overcast and gloom the following day, leading to steady rain on the next, an overnight frost opening to a fine, warm, sunny day, then strong wind on the last. Surprisingly, after years of instilled cynicism at the Met Office’s struggle with our maritime climate, as steady as a Volvo, that is exactly the weather we got.

The Swedes in the party had done much to organize the venue, a chef and transport. A caring bunch, they continued their concern for our well-being by raising our awareness of mosquitoes and ticks and the horrid things that can happen to you as a result of meeting them. We should use plenty of repellant, tuck trousers into socks, keep outdoor clothing at the door, check your body over afterwards etc. That had me and a few others itching.

Participants from DICE, a gaming company based in Stockholm, had also arranged to borrow four Genelec 8040A monitor speakers and stands, which gave us the option for stereo and surround sound of an honest and impressive quality; definitely something for the letter to Santa. Interfacing was provided by a MacBook Pro and an RME Babyface. We used this to listen to some of the recordings Chris and Jez had brought along, as well as tracks we'd made on the trip.

I had wondered why the computer gaming industry were so strongly represented on the trip. What had fantasy shoot-em-ups and sci-fi adventures to do with the remote, still and real? A few gamers explained that for each incredible visual world they create from scratch, there is a convincing soundscape that also has to be developed from nothing.

So from something I felt totally alienated from I came to respect and appreciate that what they do is remarkably artistic, technical and skillful, requiring good judgement to build up layers of sound to match the visual action. Not all their scenes are pristine crystal worlds; the dirty and real feature too, so it is important that the soundtracks support the illusion. In fact, what they do is the very opposite, of my passive hearing and filtering out.

Microphone specification data alone is useful to a point but can never be definitive on aesthetics. On one day we compared ten stereo set-ups back-to-back, all recorded in the same woodland location at the same time. There were some recordings noticeably quieter than others, and some seemed flawed by a hole in the stereo space or a lack of depth. With no clear standout winner I'd say that all recordings were usable for identification purposes, they all sounded different, and that there was a correlation between cost of the recording chain and their subjective ranking of realism and aesthetic appeal, although the law of diminishing returns also applies.

My favourites in the microphone set-ups were a pair of spaced DPA 4060 and Neumann RSM191 (both of which I also own, so I am used to their sound), and several favoured the quiet smooth rendition by a crossed pair of Sennheiser MKH 8040s. The rest of the recording chain was not standardised, so the experiment is flawed and the debate can run on. It is ultimately a personal choice and one that is, I believe, situational with the mood of the listener.

Of the wildlife heard or seen most if not all can be found readily in the UK. There were more voices and different choirs rather than rare instruments to be heard, but it was a very quiet stage on which they performed.

Among the the less common species, the white-tailed eagle was seen patrolling high across the estuary and later over woodland a few kilometers inland. A few in the group also recorded common crane. I am not the best at identifying birds: I regularly flick through my bird book after a trip, only to find that those I recognize on its pages have never been noted on our shores. Despite the absence of other rarities, with help from those who know better I can justifiably claim the following twitcher list: chaffinch, crossbill, goldcrest, greenfinch, siskin, snipe, woodcock, arctic tern, pied flycatcher, common sandpiper, black-backed gull, black-headed gull, hooded crow, jackdaw, black grouse, robin, blue tit, reed warbler, Canada goose, mute swan, greater spotted woodpecker, pied wagtail and yellow wagtail.

A useful change from home is that I don't have a sheltered inlet right on the doorstep, with arctic terns more than eager to demonstrate their fishing skills, un-phased by microphone-wielding spectators. They were performing most days, and I was able to track them easily with my Telinga Pro-7, even picking up the momentary shudder they did after a dive to shake the water off their plumage. It is one of those track moments that will steal a smile from me alone as only I have the visual association of when the shudder occurs.

On the first morning I rose at 03:30, crept out of the dorm as quietly as I could, which is not so quiet with the recording paraphernalia, only to find the dawn already in full swing. The higher latitude kicks the sun out of bed about an hour earlier than Sussex. I set my stereo rig up at the water's edge and listened to arctic terns, and common sandpiper. In the woodland the blackbirds and robins carried the chorus.

The rising sun was burning off a wispy mist on the inlet. I was enjoying the solitude, scene and sounds so much I had hardly noticed the mosquitoes delightedly tucking into my knuckles. The recording at that point contains a few cuss words, human flapping and velcro action. A Canada goose honked past in reassuring stereo. Later, a riot of gulls mobbed a sea eagle over the opposite shore. Still, it was a productive start with encouraging prospects for the rest of the trip.

After breakfast, Jez riley French spoke about contact microphones, hydrophones, coil pickups, playing several interesting tracks of found sounds. He introduced the latest generation of hydrophone he builds and sells, featuring a new acoustic coating, but more of that, later. The finale was a demonstration of his Pettersson bat detector on several objects, none of which was a bat, and no less interesting for that. With enthusiasm whipped-up, groups split off in mini-buses in search of wildlife and atmospheres.

I joined a party on the search for an abandoned iron works, hoping for echoic spaces and the lonely sounds of dereliction. Though we never found it, we did come across a farmhouse and out-buildings that had fallen into beautiful haunted disrepair, ragged, sagging and collapsed. While we unpacked our kit one of the group went to check at a homestead we had passed a few kilometres back that it would be OK for us to record there.

The reception was surprising: "So you are the sound recordists. I read about you in the newspaper". On the first night a journalist for the Tierp local press had interviewed the Wildeye faculty, and a few participants, to find out why we were there. Let's face it, parabolic reflectors, microphones in furry zeppelins and headphones attract more curiosity than cameras

By the next day we were front-page news. We learned that the last occupant of the house was an elderly woman; it looked as if life there had stopped suddenly as the kitchen still had dishes in the sink and there were several rusted tins of coffee on the windowsill. We recorded damp rooms, leaking ceilings, creaky walls, flapping corrugated iron, and the birds that had taken up residency. I put the Telinga low down in a tumble of desiccated rosehip that whistled and rattled in the breeze.

As the cloud sheet thickened that evening birdsong echoed from across the shore. Sound seemed to travel further and made more expansive by the conditions. Some of the group recorded tawny owls, their calls dramatically lifted by and perhaps exploiting this acoustic mirror. After dinner we listened to some of the day's tracks and hatched a plan to set microphones up near the shore for the dawn chorus, running lines into the main cabin so that we were out of sight and snug indoors.

Afterwards, I treated the rig, now looking like a wet rodent, to a few hours in the relative dry of the boiler room before putting it to work again on a woodland dawn chorus the next day.

It was still raining after breakfast so, with Jez's new hydrophones, Dolphin Ears, DPA 8011 and a few other brands on the table the suggestion was to try to record something watery. We listened to and recorded drainpipes, splashes, torrents, the depths of murky pools that were as silent as they were dark and the gentle grazing of snails and fish in the shallows just offshore. I gave up recording to wonder at the lichens and moss that grow in swathes of pastel carpet on the boulders and as beards on trees.

The rain gave way to a mizzle, light enough for us to explore the Ängskärs nature reserve, which is made up of native woodland spaced as nature intended.

Basecamp Aengskaersgoarden

About half the group rose by 03:00 to set the gear up. It was drizzling, and it looked as if it would either peter out or develop into rain proper. We didn't have to wonder for long as it made its intentions clear, sending all but a few back to bed. Since I had already set my gear up I decided to weather it out. Or at least my rig could. With a window on the shore and a fifty-metre cable I recorded nearly two hours of a surprisingly lively and atmospheric evolving dawn chorus from the comfort of the lounge.

The rig consists of two DPA 4060 microphones, each placed either side of a yoga brick, mounted on a balsa platform. It has a 3/8" nut on the bottom to attach to a mic stand. Wind protection is provided by a soft fur fabric cover, attached with camera tape. It ain't pretty, but it performed pretty well. The fur fabric sounded appropriately splashy when the rain was at its heaviest.

We searched for a pond that promised some amphibian noise, but were probably a week too early for them. Though a Frog was seen when the microphone was put in place, that was its show for the day, hopping off to leave us to a recording of the woodland still, an occasional chaffinch and a squeaky Goldcrest.

One of the group found what appeared to be the claw marks of a bear on the lichen, adding to the paranoia I was feeling about deer ticks crawling up my legs.

Chris Watson paced out the distance from a hillock to the road, found it was in range, and suggested it as a good venue for the next dawn chorus.

I walked back to the base, hoping to find an alternative recording site, for a different perspective.

I found what I thought might sound interesting: a thinning of trees about thirty metres from the road, bordered by a rocky outcrop and a reed-filled stream. I imagined I'd hear sedge warblers and perhaps something unusual on the rock face, now dappled in sunlight filtering through the trees.

We were on the road by 02:45 and not surprisingly we hadn't hit rush hour. I got out of the mini-bus on the way, a dark woodland path made no less eery by the red head torch. While the other recordists had had the sense to run mics from the warmth of the mini-bus, I sat on a camping stool beside the road, slowly seizing-up in the near freezing temperature. I was grateful for the chocolate bar I'd left in the recording bag. That rustle and click on the recording may be leaves and twigs, but it could also be me chomping up my morale on a cold and lonely vigil.

It was tempting at that point to go back to bed but the sunrise over the inlet was too uplifting to ignore. Migrating swarms of birds were heading East from across the Baltic. I swapped the stereo rig for the Telinga Pro-7 to record the shore birds. Well, try to record anything, to be honest.

As strange as it was that the previous day's rainy dawn had been a bustle of bird-life, the welcoming sun seemed to have sent the majority away or under cover. After a few lingering and hopeful looks, with a feeling that the fun would start as soon as I turned my back, I went to bed. But I found that I was too cold to sleep, so just lay there until breakfast-time, a reason to get up for a warm shower.

The sun may have melted many of the birds away but the underwater world had woken up to it.

An impressive collection!

What sounded like a wheezing Crane flew over at the start, which bode well for what was to follow. But, hoping for the spectacular, I was rather under-whelmed: a Robin reveille, taken up by Wren, followed by a determined turf war between blackbirds, chirpy blue tits, Pigeon coo and Goldcrests playing with rusty scissors. The reed bed delivered nothing more than a shimmering hiss that I attributed at first to the soaking the rig had had the day before, perhaps damaging the capsules.

A mini-bus of rosy-faced recordists, glowing from the heater, picked me up at 04:10; I found it a struggle to release the XLR connectors with fingers feeling like they'd been swapped for cucumbers.

A short walk to a nearby mooring showed just how interesting this soundscape is to explore. My Dolphin Ear Pro picked up rhythmic chatter, crackle, rasps, rattles, plinks and burps. Shoals of small fish flew in staccato formation around the hydrophone, scarpering when a solitary fellow the length of baguette, possibly with malevolent intentions, joined in.

On the next jetty, Chris Watson had lowered a pair of DPA 8011.I took the next turn to connect up: the difference between what I had been listening to and the DPAs was incredible. The combination of stereo and higher sensitivity hydrophones is very impressive. Jez demonstrated the effectiveness of his hydrophones on play-back, later.

Listening with the DPA 8011's

They are certainly sensitive, with a good spectrum of sound, and sell for a worryingly reasonable price. Chirrup per pound, they are a bargain.

On the way back to base I had the Telinga connected and ready for wildlife action. What caught my attention, however, was in the grass. I thought it was a glitch at first, but the noise - a snore or snarl, was repeated, at several locations. To the naked ear it was quietly audible, and easy to miss if walking by in a hurry. Chris and Piers carefully inspected the dried grass and damp ditch for a likely culprit, but none was found. A local couple stopped, suggesting basking snakes. We thought stridulation, and I didn't think this was prime rattler territory.

Back at base, Chris Watson explained a few approaches to recording a certain species. As I am mostly a guerilla recordist, without much of a strategy, this was all useful instruction. For the benefit of those even newer to wildlife recording than me, I'll summarize. The two most workable solutions are the parabolic reflector, which comes into its own with creatures on the move or when they are physically inaccessible, and the other is to get up close and personal.

For the situation on the shoreline, where a common sandpiper couple seemed to be eyeing up territory for a nest, he explained the importance of reconnaissance and sensitive field-craft. A microphone could be placed close by, making use of what's lying around as natural camouflage, using long cable runs, allowing time for the talent to get used to any changes to their terrain and when a second microphone could be used to record a group's interactions.

Chris also described another setup using small capsules, such as the DPA4060, for recording birdsong on a territorial perch. These are techniques I can and will try.

Later that day, making the most of the sun, we drove inland on a quest to record cranes. We found a likely habitat - that's a flooded open plain rather than a building site - but there were no birds. A little further on we arrived at an area of managed conifer forest, with fire-break corridors, fronting a low rise of mixed woodland and open scrub: a something-for-everyone kind of terrain. We scattered in all directions according to interest and to avoid recording recordists. I climbed the hill, setting the stereo rig in the woodland, and simultaneously tracking individuals with the Telinga.

The wind was getting up by this point, with waves of shaking leaves scouring through the trees. Though pleasing to listen to on the stereo rig the parabolic picks up a compressed slice of the shushing foliage in front of and behind the target sound.

With the Telinga trained on conifers I listened to a glassy shimmer of needles. Between gusts, my arm dropped for a rest. I was surprised to hear the same snoring snarling rattle I had recorded earlier. I even took the windshield off the Telinga to make sure that there wasn't a frustrated beetle scrabbling to get out.

The environment was similar to where I had heard the sound before: dry grass cover beside damp hollows. While musing this I looked down to find mosquitoes probing through my socks and I suspected a few had gone up my leg for some tasty calf. Time to move on.

I have subsequently had the sound identified by a Swedish insect enthusiast's group on Facebook as Hygrolycosa rubrofasciata, a (red-faced) wolf spider. I can pretend to be an authority on the topic now: the male wolf spider finds a dried leaf to use as a sounding board, then drums a tantalizing rhythm with their abdomen and pedipalps to attract a mate.

Research is ongoing to determine the relationships between the drumming, body weight, breeding success, longevity and so on. Though these are usually heard in April the drumming had been delayed a few weeks, presumably the effect of latitude. The spider has been found at sites in Suffolk and Norfolk, too, so listen out.

Chris Watson suggested certain birds we might see in the terrain and uncannily, as if he were commentating at an air show, one crossbill appeared, then the mate it was calling to, then a Siskin, and a Pied Flycatcher. It went quiet for a while. Flying at a height you'd think an oxygen mask might be needed was a solitary raptor on the prowl, possibly a sea eagle, menacing enough even as a speck to send up an 'unwelcome committee' of corvids to recommend another part of town.

We met up with another group by an avenue of pylons, recording aeolian and manually induced sounds with piezo pickups attached to the stabilizing wires. Jez was on hand to coach technique. We had listened to some extraordinary recordings he had made of fence wires, a metal stairwell, quiet spaces, creaking branches and a teasel stem. It's never certain what sounds emerge as there are many variables at play. The seemingly inanimate and quiet are worth listening into; the results are often intriguing and surprising. These wires moaned, and zinged, like sci-fi films have taught us phaser-weaponry sounds.

That last evening we made a sterling effort to lighten our luggage and do our bit for Swedish glass recycling by depleting our stores of wine, beer and whisky. After three successive dawn chorus attempts the soporific brews were hardly necessary, but one has to do one's part. The collective snoring volume was raised a notch that night, so if ever there were proof needed that hearing and listening are two distinct things, this is it.

I had joined one of my room mates in setting up a microphone in the woodland, running wires in through the bedroom window so that I wouldn't even need to get out of bed. I woke at 03:00 to turn the recorder on, and unwittingly turned it off again about a minute later as I lowered the monitoring volume to sleep with a lullaby of birdsong playing to drown out the snoring. Perhaps it would have been better to get out of bed after all.

Back home, with the regular shush of traffic filtering through the double glazing, and the occasional thump of a truck taking the speed bumps too quickly, I think back to those quieter days by the Baltic, the generous and affable company, and the pleasure of just listening 'live' and to recordings I and others had made. They were a great bunch who hold the sense of hearing in high esteem. Discussions were inspiring and often hilarious.

All sounds need context for meaning. My last recording was just after breakfast with the stereo rig in an open wood shelter, its pores whistling and planks rattling in the muscular wind. It has a spacious atmosphere, rickety, but resistant, with distant birdsong stretched on the breeze. I can picture it: dense spider webs that would trap a penny, its compacted earth floor and the corrugated roof lifting to the nails.

Listening back, I am thinking of a scene in a computer game the wood shed track could also fit. In the distance, over the cabins, the flag-pole waved and the sheet slapped, this time appropriate to the setting I had in mind.

A useful little gadget: Hercules Quik-N-Ez Mic Adaptor

Simon Elliott

One of the constant niggles of wildlife sound recording, at least for me, is trying to match up the various different threads and mounts between professional audio equipment (usually expensive) and consumer photographic equipment (usually cheap).

Adaptors can be hard to find, and if you succeed, they are often costly. I've written before about the benefits of using anglers' equipment – rust-proof, almost infinitely adaptable and very cheap – but the problem is that then you find yet another thread size, and this time it is 'reversed', i.e. female connectors where audio/photo have male.

Recently I've discovered a little device that solves many of my problems, and marries professional audio gear to cheap angling gear (or any other suitable pole) at minimal cost.

The imaginatively named Hercules HA603 Quik-N-EZ Mic Adaptor is an adaptor that is designed to clip quickly on to a microphone stand, and has a male 3/8" thread for connection to a standard professional microphone mount. It also comes supplied with a 5/8" thread adaptor, and can be found on the internet for little more than £5.

The diameter of any 'pole' to which it can be attached appears to be 14-17mm, ideally 15mm. This is perfect for most of my fishing accessories, bank sticks etc.
For instance, I can use a standard angling bank stick plus the Hercules adaptor to mount just about any mic combination, except perhaps a parabolic reflector.

Indeed if I know I'm going to be working on soft ground, which includes most woodland and moorland, I now rarely take a tripod, saving considerable weight. I've even found that I can use the Hercules to mount a full Rycote MKH60/30 windshield on to my 4 metre carbon fibre landing net pole.

This gives me a good long boom set up for a fraction of the normal cost (landing net pole £10 from a fishing sale + £5 Hercules adaptor, compared with potentially several hundred pounds for a professional carbon fibre boom, and as far I can tell doing exactly the same job).

I have found the adaptor to be extremely robust, and would recommend this device to anyone looking for cheap, flexible outdoor mic mounting solutions.

AT-804 on short bank stick

Isle of Islay Spring Meeting May 2012

Les Whittle

The WSRS arranged their Spring meeting to take place on Islay from the 19th to the 26th May this year, and nine merry men took up the offer.

We had to travel to a place called Kennacraig, where we boarded the ferry. Thirty-six miles and two hours later, we docked at Portaskaig, then we had to go to the West side of the island to our self catering accommodation. The cottages seem to lack nothing, but I did hear the odd whisper that it was a little expensive.

There was a strong wind on the Sunday and Monday, which hampered good recording. On the Monday evening, James How, a WSRS member and a warden on the island, came to see us to advise the more advantageous places to visit.

I learned that Islay was twenty five miles long and twenty five miles wide, with a population of three and a half thousand plus nine distilleries!

Corncrakes were calling both day and night, with the Chough and Raven quite vocal too. At the marshes, there were the usual Redshank, Curlew, Shelduck, Whitethroat, Sedge Warbler and Moorhen, but no Coot.

There were the usual woodland/garden birds: Blackbird, Thrush, Wren, Dunnock, Chaffinch, Greenfinch etc, with Swallows flitting about.

During the week there were nearly a hundred species seen or heard, including Red Breasted Merganser, Black Guillemot and Arctic Tern.

On the Friday evening we invited James How to join us for dinner at the Port Charlotte Hotel and a very pleasant and enjoyable evening it was.

Finally, and on a personal note, I feel a visit to Islay was well worth it and I did enjoy the week!

Obituary for Jeffery Boswall

Chris Watson

Jeffery joined the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Film Unit in 1987 when I was there in my second year of a two year contract as sound recordist. Naturally Jeffery's reputation as an accomplished and dynamic wildlife film-maker preceded him and I think, as Head of the department, he fulfilled everyone's expectations and brought a new vigour to the Unit.

For me Jeffery was a wonderful sound ally. He was one of the founders of the British Library of Wildlife Sounds and I had tremendous respect for his ethics and meticulous working methods. In coming to work closely with him I also valued his depth of knowledge as a naturalist and an ornithologist in particular. Jeffrey was widely travelled in Russia and the then Soviet states and during one lunch time talk at the RSPB he described the bird life along the Ob river in western Siberia which included a sub species of the Great skua, the Ob skua. Jeffery had a wicked sense of humour.

During his travels out to the USSR Jeffery met several Soviet naturalists and scientists interested in bio-acoustics and formed a long standing friendship with Professor Boris Veprintsev who recorded the epic series of vinyl LP's 'The Birds of the Soviet Union'. Jeffery brought Veprintsev over to speak at the British Kinematograph Sound & Television Society's international symposiums for wildlife film-makers and I well remember sitting alongside Jeffery, who was smiling broadly, whilst listening to an astonishing recording of Little curlew (*Numenius minutus*) which Veprintsev had made during one of his spring expeditions to Siberia.

Jeffery took delight in bringing people with a common interest together whether this was for research, education, bio-acoustics or wildlife programmes. In recent years the radio productions I was involved with usually prompted a postcard from Jeffery with simply the programme title and marks out of ten. My other warm and personal memories of him are of someone who was a stimulating and entertaining travel companion as well as a man who always wore two watches.

What ever time zone Jeffery is in now I like to imagine that he will be organising one of his favourite activities, a symposium. His announcements for these events always included the definition; '*a drinking party with convivial discussion'*.

Cheers Jeffery.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS

Copy dates are 1st August (Autumn edition) and 1st February (Spring edition).

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All common document formats can be handled, but ideally Microsoft Word DOC or RTF in Arial font.

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London W1W 5BB
T: 020 7665 6463
F: 020 7665 6465
sales@soundnetwork.co.uk

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