



Wildlife Sound

The Journal of the Wildlife Sound Recording Society



Volume 16 No.2 - Autumn 2025



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Photo Credits:

Cover: African Elephants (*Loxodonta Africana*) - (photo. Rob Bain)

Inside Front Cover: Top: koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) - (photo. Nikki Sheth)

Bottom: Allied Rock-Wallaby (*Petrogale assimilis*) - (photo. Nikki Sheth)

Contents Page: (Top Right): Bald Eagle (photo by Steven Shepard), (Bottom right): Song Thrush (photo by Roger Boughton)



About the Wildlife Sound Recording Society

The 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 Society exists to encourage the enjoyment, recording and understanding of wildlife and other natural sounds.

This is achieved by circulating a sound magazine and 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 other appropriate means

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

Honorary Officers

President:	Eloisa Matheu de Cortada
Chair:	Clive Davies email: chair@wildlife-sound.org
Vice Chair:	Patrick Franke email: vice.chairman@wildlife-sound.org
Webmaster:	Hans van den Berg email: listening-session@wildlife-sound.org
Hon Secretary:	Alan Burbidge email: secretary@wildlife-sound.org
Hon Treasurer:	Robert Malpas email: treasurer@wildlife-sound.org
Hon Sound Magazine Editor:	Greg Green email: soundmag@wildlife-sound.org
Hon Journal Editor:	James Muxworthy email: journal.editor@wildlife-sound.org
Hon Membership Secretary:	Ian Brady email: membership@wildlife-sound.org
Hon Media Officer:	Angel Perez Grandi email: media@wildlife-sound.org
Hon Officer without Portfolio:	Graham Norman email: owp2@wildlife-sound.org

For further information
go to
www.wildlife-sound.org

Editorial

by James Muxworthy

A warm, welcome to this Wildlife Sound edition.

As the air cools and the leaves fall from the trees in the UK, there is a definite change in feel whilst out recording, both thermally and acoustically.

I've been trying to spend time recording locally in Northumberland this year including the WSRS Spring 2025 field trip which was held in College Valley only about 20 miles drive from my home (about 12 miles as 'as the crow flies' if you were to walk across the Cheviot Hills). Also, I've spent some time over on the coast and also overnight recording in the garden. I've looked to record at locations by taking several recording rigs at the same time (where carrying capacity allows), Binaural Head, Double Mid-side with Sennheiser MKH 8030/8040's, Spaced baffled omni 8020's and also Parabolic reflector. Typically, I use Zoom F3's for Stereo and Zoom F6 for multichannel recording at 32 bit 96KHz or greater. I find this is more possible in terms of weight with small recorders and short cables attached to the recorders. However, when I want to listen on headphones whilst recording, I often use lightweight extended headphone cables attached to the recorder local to the microphones where needed.

One of my recordings achieved 2nd Restricted in the Combination class of the 2024 competition. This was recorded from microphones (2x Primo EM272 spaced omni) I have permanently positioned under the edge of some roof tiles which gives a nice recording perspective from 8m up, of the countryside behind our house.

In this edition we start with our reports from officers. Additionally, we have a small team looking at updating the look and navigation of the website. Unlike many websites, the WSRS site needs to function as both an attractive 'window' to the outside world whilst supporting information and activities for members. More detailed information on this will be available in due course.

We have two meeting reports; the first being for the Spring Field Meeting held over the Easter weekend in Northumberland and also the AGM and Members Weekend in July.

The 2024 WSRS Competition results are displayed on page 17 and the winning recordings can be found in the September 2025 Sound Magazine SM219.

Please also note as per the report from Greg our Sound Magazine Editor, a decision was made last year to phase out circulation of the Sound Magazine on CD and move to the online version only. Please read the more detailed information about this in Greg report on page 8.



We welcome our first contribution from the new WSRS President, Eloisa Matheu de Cortada. Eloisa has written a piece to introduce herself to the society and share some of her recording work over the years. Eloisa handed over from Chris Watson officially at the AGM in July. We of course thank Chris for all his excellent and invaluable contribution to WSRS. Chris has actively been involved with workshops, field meetings and of course his regular contribution to the Wildlife Sound Journal to name a few.

Thank you to members who have contributed articles to this edition. John F Burton has written further on his time working with the BBC in 1963 recording wildlife in Holland. Again, I really appreciate hearing about recording from years gone by. Often to make progress in the future, an awareness of what has been, can be very helpful.

'Sailing' back across the North Sea, to Lincolnshire in the UK, Terry Barnatt tells us about 'The Cranes of Willow Tree Fen'. This is a reserve managed by Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and Terry by being involved with their Crane Watch surveys enabled him at times to gain a little more access to the site than is generally allowed nowadays. Due to successful breeding of the Cranes on the reserve, a viewing platform has been constructed at the carpark which allows viewing over the reserve, as now open access is closed.

Rob Bain has been on his travels again, this time for just over a week in Zambia. Rob took his portable recording equipment to McBrides Camp and enjoyed recording opportunities in a range of locations. He also managed to do some photography and one of his photos is featured on the cover of this Journal edition.

Nikki Sheth has been working on an immersive audio trail in Australia which allows participants to connect with Flying foxes through sound. There has been a negative perspective on Flying foxes and the project is part of a creative tool to encourage engagement towards ecological change and conservation.

In our Species Close-Up section, David Bissett has been doing some interesting analysis of a Great tit call. He has looked at Chiffchaff like calls the Great tits make and compared spectrograms with other Chiffchaff calls.

David de la Haye previously discussed a Sonic Pond Dipping event about three years ago. Since then, over 50 events have been carried out across the country. David's latest update discusses the sounds and recording of underwater plants and the sharing of his findings at an international conference.

Have you ever thought about recording very quiet sounds, perhaps of insects? well Dick Todd has been

building a sound isolation chamber to help him achieve a more consistent recording space to mitigate outside noise. Dick gives a brief description on his construction so far with some photographs.

As always, please don't forget about the loan equipment the society has available, details on page 48.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of the Journal.

The following Journal Sections can be used as a guide for future submissions.

- Reports from Meetings and Field Trips organised by the Society (*including AGM and workshops*)
- Field Recording (*articles, field trips and other recording experiences*)
- Creative (*sound art, creative use of recordings, installations etc*)
- Equipment (*reviews and applications*)
- Conference Reports (*feedback on external meetings members have attended*)
- Tech Talk (*All things technical*)
- Species Close up (*either recording of species with spectrograms etc or discussion of species and behaviour*)
- Fieldcraft and Microphone Techniques (*A single theme may sometimes link separate articles*)
- Recording Locations (*do you have an interesting recording location you would like to share?*)
- Science and Research (*e.g. aspects of biology, ecology, habitat etc.*)



Above: Recording at Holystone Common in Northumberland on a May evening. Parabolic Reflector fitted with Zoom F3 recorder on Tripod

Chair's Report

by Clive Davies

Wherever you are on this wonderful planet, I hope that over our summer or your winter, you have had the opportunity to get out recording. Earlier this year I had the chance to get some mics up close on a song post used by European nightjar, *Caprimulgus europaeus*, on Cannock Chase in Staffordshire. I have given a copy of the recordings to the local ringing group who target the nightjar. The feedback from them is that the recordings made on The Chase by far, outstrip the success of the generic ones they had. It was great to see the recordings being used as part of their research.

Currently I am loading my decent recordings onto eBird. The poorest getting binned, but sometimes my finger does hover over the delete button.

The website development is in hand and the editor, James, has commented on this in his Editorial. As explained by Greg in the most recent sound magazine number SM 219, this will be the last where a copy of

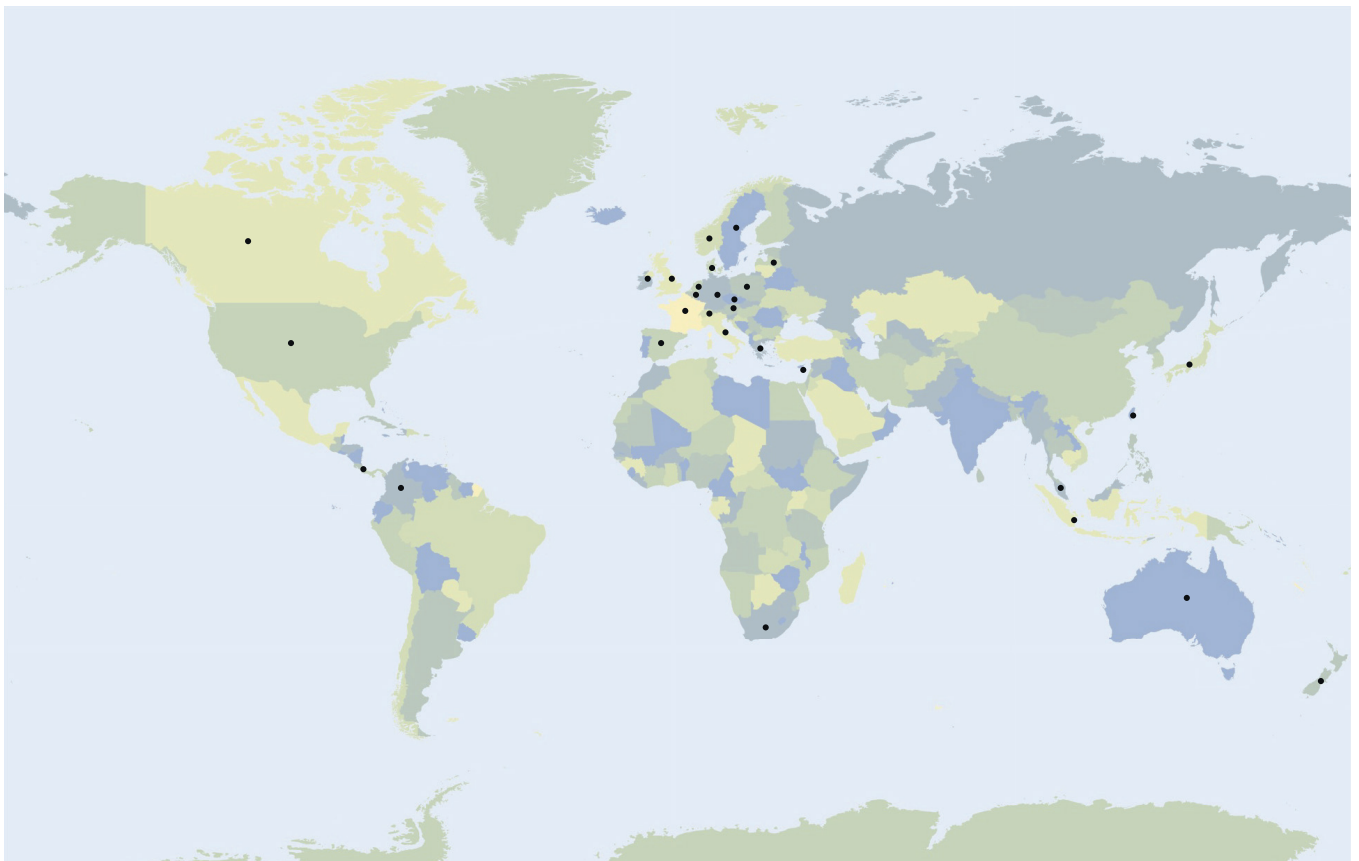
the CD is being supplied. However, this is not meant to exclude any of our members. Should anyone have difficulty with downloading the sound magazine, please get in touch.

It seems early to say this, but as the shops are already stocked with Christmas goods, I wish you all a joyful festive holiday.

Best Wishes Clive



At a glance; countries where WSRS Members are based around the world. As a society we are lucky to be able to hear a diverse range of recording habitats from the 'doorsteps' of the membership.



Secretary's Report

by Alan Burbidge



For over 20 years, the Annual Competition has included an award for Fieldcraft. The award is not given every year because it relies on entrants completing the entry form with sufficient detail to demonstrate what fieldcraft skills had been used to capture the recorded sounds.

The loose interpretation of the rules by some entrants and the lack of clarity in the rules on what constitutes sufficient fieldcraft has led to the award being temporarily removed from the competition. I feel that this is a great shame because, in my view at least, we all employ some level of fieldcraft to make our recordings. I can of course only speak for myself but, even using a parabola requires a level of skill and fieldcraft to secure a quality recording of an individual songster.

Even if you don't know the identity of your songster and how it might respond to your movements, unless you have been super lucky to immediately find yourself, say, 20m from the individual, you usually need to work your way bit by bit closer to the individual (constantly assessing as you do so, how the subject is responding to you) to improve the signal strength of the subject versus the ambience. That for example might require fieldcraft skills of having your mic rig appropriately camouflaged and knowledge of how the songster might react as you edge yourself and your parabola metre by metre nearer. Alternatively, you might be using a drop-rig and, having spent some time listening and watching your target individual, decide to place the rig close to one of its song-posts. In the days before digital recorders and long-lasting batteries, such a rig replacement really meant carefully positioning a microphone near the song-post and laying out somewhere between 25m and 100m of mic cable back to your observation point and your recorder.

I can't see a fundamental difference between the old-style cabling back to a recorder and the in-vogue approach of positioning an entire recording rig (drop-rig) near a song-post. The only potential difference by using up-to-date digital systems is the temptation to not be present when the recording is being made: i.e. you don't get to see the behaviour of the subject.

By way of examples: In 2005 I made a recording of European Bee-eaters at their colony. I had noticed the birds arrive on the previous day and I also noted that there was a particular bush in which they seemed to congregate and from which they called. Early the next day around first light when the birds were absent, I set up a stereo pair of dynamic cardioid mics under the 'Bee-eater bush' and laid out 25m of cable to put some distance between me and the birds. I then left the site and made recordings of other species elsewhere in the area for a couple of hours. That gave time for the

Bee-eaters to congregate. I then returned to the site and plugged my recorder into the end of my mic cable. At 25m distance, the Bee-eaters did not seem phased by my presence, so I pressed record and secured some nice close-up recordings of the birds.

This spring I came across a Common Nightingale and identified two of its song-posts. I positioned a mic-rig and 32-bit recorder close to one of the song-posts, camouflaged the rig, pressed record and left the rig overnight to record. The Nightingale sang during the night close to my mics and I secured quite a nice long sequence of song. In my view, recording both the Bee-eaters and the Nightingale required the same level of fieldcraft skill, but the latter was made with a drop-rig which seems, in the eyes of some, to be invoking the antithesis of fieldcraft.

I believe that every wildlife sound recordist makes use of and continues to develop their fieldcraft skills. It is a critical part of making wildlife sound recordings. Fieldcraft is therefore very much to be encouraged. I hope that following a review and perhaps a clarification of the rules, the Fieldcraft award will be reinstated in the competition.

Perhaps now is a good time to reflect on what fieldcraft means for each of us and maybe that will elicit some personal points of view and interesting educational articles on fieldcraft for the Journal.

Best Wishes and Happy Recording



Membership Update

by Ian Brady

Membership numbers as of September 2025 were as follows -

Total Membership		368	
<i>by type</i>		<i>by location</i>	
Individual	297	UK	243
Family	15	Rest of Europe	55
e-Member	49	Rest of World	70
Student	67		



This includes 13 visually impaired members and again shows a slight fall in membership. There have been 22 new members join to date, this year.

Paypal is the most popular means by which members pay their subscription. Stripe is also available along with bank transfer and offline payments. But we have had a few issues in that the membership has been accepted but Stripe have cancelled the transaction 23 hours later. I am now monitoring all Stripe payments.

It has come to light that a few members who pay by Bank Transfer have not had their details updated. If you pay by Paypal or Stripe this is done automatically.

If you pay by Bank Transfer please send me an email so that I can hopefully prevent this from happening in the future.

Most members automatically renew their membership but please be aware that we do not 'control' the payments from Paypal or Stripe if you want to change something you need to log on and make the changes you require.

You can change your details through the website, but please advise us of any changes to membership@wildlife-sound.org.

The International breakdown of our membership is shown in the following Table.

Australia	10	Latvia	1	Switzerland	6
Austria	2	Lithuania	1	Canada	5
				Columbia	2
		Netherlands	1	Costa Rica	1
Czech Republic	1	Norway	1	Japan	1
Denmark	2	Poland	2	New Zealand	1
France	11	Indonesia	1	South Africa	1
Germany	13	Spain	4	Taiwan	1
Ireland	2	Sweden	5	United States	46
Italy	3			Malaysia	1

Soundings

by Greg Green, Sound Magazine Editor



It's been another mostly dry summer in the UK, but the crisp air of autumn is finally upon us. I'm sure many of us will be planning which autumn and winter spectacles to record this year. I'd love to know what your microphones are trained on in the final quarter of 2025. Whether it's singing seals, bellowing deer, migrating waders, or perhaps the contrasting sounds of spring from those in the southern hemisphere, it would be great to feature some of these recordings in the next sound magazine.

Sound magazine 219 released at the start of October, featuring a look at our AGM and members' weekend, and of course, the winners and runners-up from the competition. If you've listened and read the track listing, you will be aware that a big step has been taken towards the phasing out of CDs (see below). The decision has already prompted feedback from a few members, for which I'm very grateful. It's really valuable to hear from members about how they are consuming the sound magazine, what parts they are enjoying, and how it could be improved. If you have already been in touch regarding the CD and have heard back from me, there's no need to prompt me again, but please bear in mind that there may be a delay in receiving the next issue while I collate the new mailing list.

Please keep getting in touch if you have anything to say, particularly about the latest issue. What did you think about the AGM section or Diane Hope's guest editor slot? How do you feel about moving from CDs to streaming or downloading? Ultimately the society is made for and by its members, and I want the sound magazine to be something we're all proud of.

Lastly, I'm often asked if I'm looking for more recordings for the next issue, and the answer is pretty much always yes. While I have a plentiful supply of recordings, particularly from past competition entries, it's always

useful to increase the variety of species, subjects, and recordists that I can pick from. I try to prioritise recordings in the order they were sent to me while also featuring a diversity of recordists and subjects, so I can't guarantee that your submission will appear in the next issue, but unless you are sending me loads, it will make it onto a future issue.

IMPORTANT NOTE ON THE CD .

A decision was taken in the last year to phase out production of the physical copy of the sound magazine (i.e. the CD). This decision was made to save time, money and resources for the sound magazine production, to keep up with changing trends in technology and media consumption, and in an effort to be mindful of our ecological footprint. From SM220 (late 2025) onwards, the standard way to listen to the sound magazine will be via the members area of the website where you can stream it or download in either MP3 or WAV formats. Links and instructions will be sent out with each new sound magazine announcement. We understand this will be an adjustment to some people, and for some it may make the magazine inaccessible. We do not want to exclude or alienate our members with this action. Hence, for existing members, if you have no way of accessing the SM other than by using a CD, we will still provide you with the Sound Magazine on CD. We cannot offer that as an option for new members. Please get in touch if you require CD versions going forward, or if you have any other feedback or suggestions.

You can email: soundmag@wildlife-sound.org

or write to: Greg Green, British Library, BLCC LGF, Gate 10, Midland Road, London NW1 2DB

Getting Involved

We Welcome All members to contribute to WSRs, to learn, share experience and participate in practical wildlife sound recording. There are a number of ways to get involved, which include:

- **Field Trips, Workshops, other Meetings and the AGM, Writing articles for the Journal**
- **Send Recordings to the Sound Magazine and Competitions, On-line 'Listening sessions'**
- **Interacting with the Website to access Information and use of the Members Forum**

Communications and News

This section of the journal is for members to share any any general news that may be of interest to Members, ask questions that other members may be able to assist with and perhaps discuss certain topics via letter style communications. Contact with contributors may be either direct, if contact details are given, or via the Journal Editor.

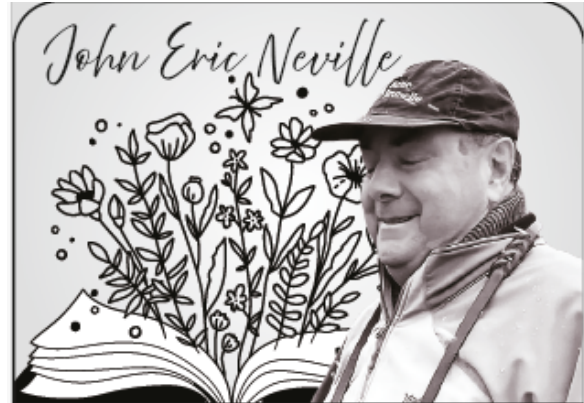
Obituary

John Neville

We have to report sadly that one of our members John Neville has passed away. Certainly since my involvement as Journal Editor I have conversed with John regarding the articles he has submitted for the Journal. During my time there have been several articles on wide ranging wildlife topics from Swainsons' Song Thrush recordings to his being involved in the Christmas Bird count in North America at his local event in Canada.

WSRS send our condolences his to his family

We have been sent the notice of John's passing from Heather Neville which is shown opposite.



John Eric Neville, age 81, passed away peacefully on Salt Spring Island, BC on April 20, 2025. A dedicated and passionate naturalist, husband, father, grandfather, and friend to many, he generously shared his love and deep knowledge of the natural world with warmth and humour. He travelled across Canada, the UK, and New Zealand recording thousands of bird songs, ~producing a body of work that includes 17 albums.

Born in 1944 in Walsall, England, John's fascination with nature was sparked in childhood. He roamed local fishing holes, hunted with his grandfather and on warm mornings watched robins flit through open kitchen windows to peck at the butter. At college in London, he often swapped reading for rock'n'roll, witnessing legends like The Beatles, Beach Boys and many more. In the '70s John moved to Canada and worked at Neville Physiotherapy Clinic in Nelson, BC, raising his family beside Kootenay Lake. He served his community through Rotary Club and was a City Councillor for 23 years, crafting legislation to conserve the town he loved.

In 1998 John moved to Salt Spring Island, lured by its natural beauty and wealth of "critters". John and Heather's adventures recording the birds inspired his writing: he authored 2 books and numerous articles. He was president of BC Nature for several years. John loved a good game of Bridge, an early morning walk, or a swim in the lake. He was a loving, playful, and warm grandfather to his grandkids with legendary hugs, awful jokes, and a wily chuckle that could warm a room.

He will be lovingly remembered by his partner Heather Neville, daughters Deborah Neville (John Adams) and Fiona Leblanc (Jamie Leblanc); grandchildren Sophia, Aiden, Rosie, and Fergus; and faithful dog Arlo. Donations accepted online:

www.naturesaltspring.org/donate



WSRS Spring Field Trip 2025

College Valley Northumberland

by James Muxworthy and Sophie Marritt

College Valley is located in the Cheviot Hills in Northumberland and the bunkhouse accommodation we stayed at is located 1 mile north of the 'The Cheviot' peak and a remote part of the Pennine Way long distance footpath. As a recording location it has great potential to be free of anthropogenic noise. Our trip was arranged for Easter weekend 18th to 21st April, however, the number of vehicles allowed up the 4 mile track of the valley road is limited to 12 per day so in principle vehicular noise should not be an issue. Also, importantly the Easter weekend was not subject to military training in the Cheviots which is based from Otterburn Camp in the southern part of the Cheviots (Dates of firing times are always made available on the Government website). Even where I live which is only about 20 miles drive south of College Valley and about 12 miles as 'the crow flies' from the most northerly point of the area used by the Ministry of Defence, you can hear activities when training is taking place. Namely deep 'booming sounds' of explosive ordnance and also low flying aircraft which can cover a very wide area of western Northumberland.

I found it pleasing that I would only have a short distance to travel to get the WSRS weekend, however timewise around 25 minutes of the Journey was along the 4 mile road once entering the valley towards the accommodation. We were staying at 'Mounthooly', an independent hostel, which is well appointed with good living facilities. The small carpark by the hostel also marks the end of vehicular access but the whole valley beyond the hostel is where we would be to spend our time recording.



Above: Mounthooly hostel accommodation.

The valley consists of high sided hills, wooded with mainly birch tree and a large area of flat land where the course of College Burn, the river that carries water from tributaries from the higher hills, meanders down the valley. A grassy track also leads from the carpark along the valley floor all the way up to the hills where

the border to Scotland can be found.



Above: The Track Running Through the Valley

The environment is quite harsh and remote so suitable footwear and clothing is recommended. Looking out for each other we deemed as good practice and knowing where people were going was a good idea. As with many areas of Northumberland being careful keeping any eye out for Adders and awareness of ticks was worthwhile. Hence, ahead of the meeting we referred everyone to our risk assessment for the trip.

The weather for the weekend was generally good and our group explored on the Friday evening to get an idea of potential recording sites. There was a small bridge part way up the valley to enable easy crossing of the water but there were also several other places where it was shallow enough to walk across. The ground was fairly dry and as a consequence we were aware that we would need to be particularly aware of ticks. We knew that the sheep which graze around the valley had recently been brought down from high up on the hillsides to areas more down towards the carpark and farm area. Unfortunately for us, that meant ticks carried by Roe deer were prevalent in the grass of the valley rather than on the sheep, which are treated. Over the course of the weekend quite a few of us had to deal with ticks either needing to be carefully removed or in my case caught 'red handed' crawling up my leg (despite wearing boots and gaiters with everything tucked in). On the whole we managed but just took extra care if we moved off the main track.

In terms of recording, the valley was on the whole quiet with occasional windy periods and you didn't need to walk that far. Access along the track was very good and it was easy to either peel off into a wooded area of birch or head in to the 'flood plain' open areas. Angel and a few others also ventured across the water onto the far side of the valley and higher up towards the valley ridge. Recording with parabolic reflectors was generally successful along with spaced omni microphones. I also took my 'weather-proof' binaural head fitted with DPA4060's along with my water-resistant box which houses spaced omni microphones, recorder and battery. This was ideal for leaving out in the valley unattended for long periods.

It is probably fair to say the range of species there were relatively low in number. Recordings made in the wood areas did enable good recordings of Willow Warbler, Chaffinch, Wren and Dunnock. Listening through my extended recordings throughout the day and overnight there was also Red-legged partridge, Pheasant and Roe deer barking. Other members of the group managed recordings of other species at various times.



Above: James' Binaural Head - Recording in a wooded area off the grassy track.

The valley did allow recording during the daytime without interference from other noise. There was the very occasional passenger plane at high altitude but nothing of any particular frequency. Perhaps the most bizarre intrusion was when Angel and I were recording standing a few hundred metres along a narrow part of the grassy track, when through my headphones I could hear an engine noise, then around the corner very slowly a gleaming white Range Rover Evoque drew closer. I thought "this does not look very much like a farmer or ranger". The vehicle stopped, as Angel and I were in the way, I went to the driver and mentioned that no vehicles were allowed past the hostel. I got a very blank look and I asked 'quizzically' "where on earth are you are going". The driver said 'Hen Hole', which is a rocky gorge at the top end of the valley with waterfalls – which you walk to !!. So, I attempted to be an upstanding citizen and said they would need to turn round and go back to the carpark and walk there. However, the undulating track had a drop on one side and rocky outcrop on the other so the only place they could turn around was to go on carefully for another 200 metres where there was a wider part near a gate. Anyway off they went and after a while we went to have a look and could see they had driven on and parked their car further up the track and presumably walked the last bit - incredible!! Other than that, we didn't really see anyone much all weekend.

Perhaps the most natural challenge to recording, was the sound of the water running down the middle of the valley which could easily be picked up by microphones at various places. On Saturday night I left my omni setup with recorder actually only about 100 metres from the water's edge but as the bank of the burn was relatively high at that point and I was on the flat part of the valley my microphone position was quite well shielded from the sound of water flowing. So, I decided it was worth leaving my recording set-up out overnight.



Above: Three Photos. Water resistant recorder setup. Spaced omni mics fitted in waterproof case with Zoom F3 and Battery inside. Camouflaged and Left overnight in valley

In addition to the success, or not, of recording on the field trip weekends the other main benefit is to allow members to spend plenty of time discussing recording, equipment and sharing knowledge and experience. I would say that on this weekend everyone really participated, helping peoples knowledge and confidence.

Overall, I really enjoyed the weekend. College Valley is an interesting location; it may not be subject to the very large numbers of birds such as those we experience on our Norfolk trips to places like Snettisham but does with some planning and understanding of species that may be present at various times of the year, provide an opportunity for a quiet recording environment

James Muxworthy.

The College Burn starts from the hillside of The Cheviot peak, carving a way as waterfalls and mossy boulder lined pools through Hen Hole.



Above: Approach to Hen Hole at the top of the Valley

Here the sound of the water is much softer than the constant hiss of the stream further down the valley. However not much wildlife sound until you get to the patches of planted alder, and birch, and the song of Willow Warblers. On Sunday, early morning listening and recording, I decide to stick to the track to avoid the ticks - despite the hiss. Others have left drop rigs on the other side of the valley behind the conifer plantation opposite the bunkhouse. Walking down valley I pick up the faint sounds of Skylarks from the hillside of The Schil, there is also Woodcock and the occasional call of Red Grouse. Tawny Owl, a male (and I think a female), start to call from the conifer plantation. The Owls carry on calling, Song Thrush start then Mistle Thrush, and I think I hear curlew calls echoing with the growing chorus. Later in the day, a walk further down the valley takes you to Hethpool, through the relict ancient woodland of Whitehall and Harrowbog Wood. Alder, birch and rowan with planted gorse flank the meandering burn. The valley feels parched in the bright sunshine, it reminds me of walking along dry chalk riverbeds in Spain after a drought, but without the Nightingales. It's a good and the only place to sit for lunch. A loud oyster catcher circles low and echoes around the valley and we hear a tentative call of a Cuckoo, *Cuculus Canorus*, then see it flying through the scrubby trees. I think my take home memory will be the canorous mix of birdsong filling and reverberant in the valley that early Sunday morning.

Sophie Marritt



Above: Richard listening to underground sounds from the 'Geophones' Les made and brought along



Left: Sophie recording with 'Binaural Hat'



Left: Les Listening to Sounds Underground



Below: Melia's Spaced Omni mics



Above: Some of The WSRS Group Outside the Hostel

Photos on this page by Melia Roger



Above: Photo Angel Pérez Grandi

by Alan Burbidge and James Muxworthy

We convened at our regular venue in Rutland at the Volunteer Training Centre in July, which provides good facilities for this meeting. Like the past few years, we ran this as a 'hybrid meeting' with the option for members able to attend in person and online via 'Zoom' meeting. There were 41 members in attendance this year in total on the Saturday. On the Sunday members attended in person at Rutland to discuss and share practical recording.

The Saturday meeting started off with an introduction from Clive the Chair and then we had the handover of the role of President. The society has been privileged to have Chris Watson as the President since 2014 and after 11 years is stepping down and handing over to Eloisa Matheu de Cortada. We all thank Chris for his support including regular contributions to the Journal, Workshops and field meetings, we wish him all our best in his future endeavours in music and sound.

(Note: Eloisa has written an article in this Journal introducing herself and sharing some of her work over the years).

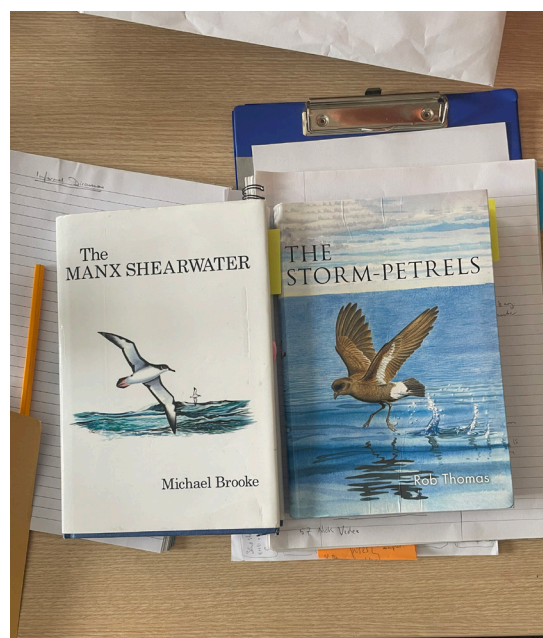
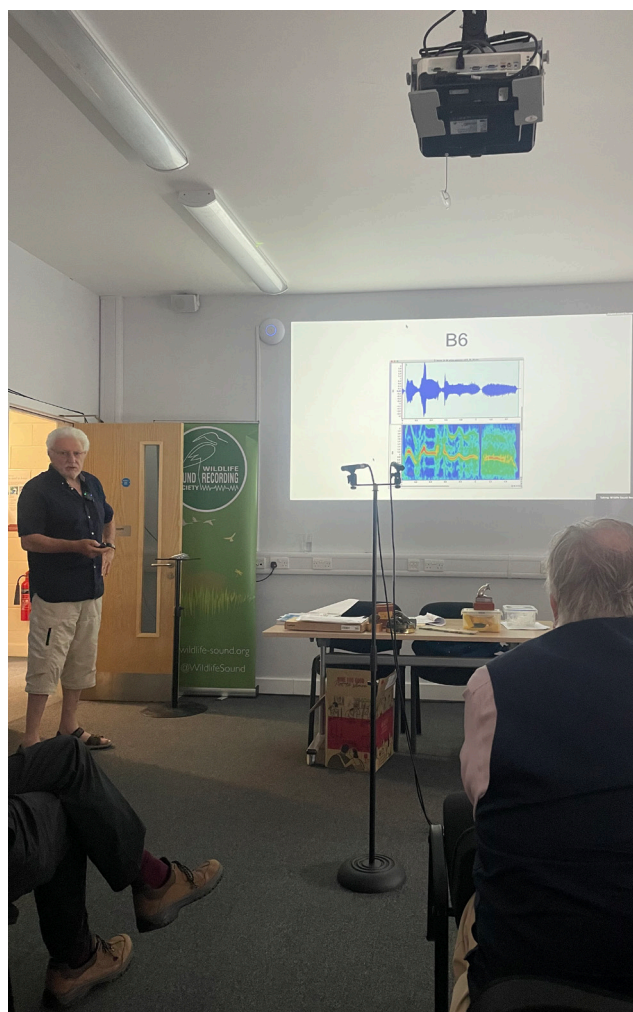
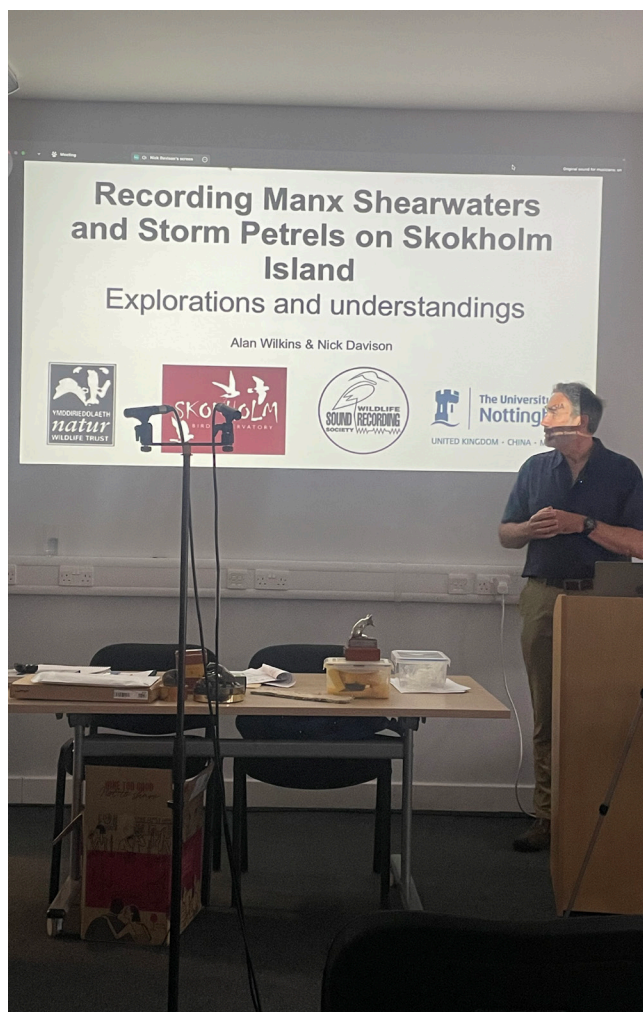
The formal part of the meeting for election of officers was completed.

There were several other items of note some of which Clive has already highlighted in his recent email to members but partly repeated below.

There were some changes to the Constitution to give the Society more flexibility to fulfil its obligations to Members by removing words stating that members would receive Society publications as hard copy. That hasn't been strictly correct for some time with the adoption of on-line communications and the advent of e-members.

Also of note were the increase in membership fees by 10%. The last time fees were increased was many years ago and in that time costs have increased significantly.

After a break for lunch, we welcomed Nick Davison and Alan Wilkins to give a presentation on their long-term studies of Manx Shearwaters and Storm Petrels on Skokholm. They shared much about their study to understand in detail the calls of these birds. They Discussed the practical challenges of positioning microphones and recording equipment throughout the time of their study on the island which is based about a mile off the coast. This talk was very well received.



Top Left: Nick presenting

Top Right: Alan discussing calls and spectrograms

Bottom Left: Alan and Nick

Bottom Right: Some books they brought along

Another tea break and then it was time for the presentations for the 2024 Competition winners along with playback of their recordings. The winners of the competition are also given on page 17 of this Journal edition. The overall winner this year and receiving the Silver Fox Award was Gerard Grant with his recording “Midnight Confrontation Lions and Baboons”. The Restricted overall winner was Jesse Marshall with his recording “Seals of Portnahaven”.



Award for Alan Burbidge



Award for Nikki Sheth



Award held up by Clive for Gerard Grant (Silver Fox)

In addition to this we were very pleased to present the Edith Scourey Award to Simon Elliott for his longstanding and exceptional contribution to WSRS. Of particular note recently has been his running of the Sound Magazine, invaluable contributions to workshops and in his role as a WSRS Officer.



Above: Ian holding up the Edith Scourey Award for the Winner Simon Elliott

won by Robert Malpas.

Those members that came on Sunday for the workshops enjoyed a range of activities including: learning ‘how not to burn their fingers whilst soldering’ along with useful chats and discussions whilst ambling on the reserve with various recording rigs. One highlight of that excursion for Alan, was Les Goodyer’s geophony recording rig: fashioned from bent wire and a Jez Riley-French contact mic. It was incredibly sensitive revealing the munching noises of caterpillars plus buzzing of unknown, presumably, insects in the soil. Some general recording was possible but there was the occasional sound of aircraft. The purpose of the day though was perhaps more to share experience and knowledge with each other, than achieve world class recordings.



After the competition section, we rounded off with the annual quiz and this year the ‘Golden Ear Award’ was

WSRS COMPETITION 2024 RESULTS

Class	Recording Title	Recordist
Individual		
2 nd Open	Honeyeater brings in the dawn	Sue Gould
1 st Open	Icterine warbler	Robert Malpas
2 nd Restricted	Muntjac Barking	David Bissett
1 st Restricted	Great Reed Warbler	Leo Wilhelm
Species		
2 nd Open	Cranes	Alan Burbidge
1 st Open	Singing beavers	Ronald Schmidt
2 nd Restricted	Morning Cranes	Leo Wilhelm
1 st Restricted	Seals of Portnahaven	Jesse Marshall
Combination		
2 nd Open	Nightingale in a carpet of frogs	Leo Wilhelm
1 st Open / Non-Avian	Midnight Confrontation Lions and Baboons	Gerard Grant
2 nd Restricted	Bats and Birds at 7am	James Muxworthy
1 st Restricted	Tengmalm's owl and pygmy owl at night	Izabella Dlużyk
Habitat		
2 nd Open	Night at the Barwik swamp	Izabella Dlużyk
1 st Open	Leopardwood Dawn	Sue Gould
2 nd Restricted	Great Southern Brood	Tom Kelly
1 st Restricted	Dawn at Fen Drayton	Jesse Marshall
Creative		
2 nd	The Rhythms of Life	Robert Berry
1 st	Chiroptera	Nikki Sheth
Restricted Overall Winner	Seals of Portnahaven	Jesse Marshall
Silver Fox	Midnight Confrontation Lions and Baboons	Gerard Grant

The Recordings Can be Listened to in Sound Magazine SM219



WSRS President
Eloisa Matheu de Cortada

Above: Recording larks in the steppes and deserts of Morocco, very early in the morning, in the spring of 2004

At the Spring AGM 2025 I had the honour of being elected as President of the society, to fill the gap left by Chris Watson after 10 years in the position, an enormous responsibility for me, I hope to be up to the task. I am aware that I am the first woman to hold this position, which is for me an honour and also, in a certain way, I feel it as recognition of my work for more than 35 years during which the presence of women in my environment has been very scarce. But fortunately, things are changing and field recording for naturalist purposes is becoming very popular and opening to a much wider audience.

Although I started recording in 1987, it wasn't until 1994 that I became a member of the society. And I never thought I would one day hold a position that has included such important figures in the history of nature sound recording who have been key figures for me, from Ludwig Koch to Chris Watson, whom I have had the pleasure of meeting personally at workshops in Norfolk and the Ebro Delta (Spain). Following in his footsteps is going to be very difficult! Frankly, knowing the track record of people who have held this position, I am very surprised by my choice, and at the same time, I feel very bold in accepting. I hope we made the right choice and don't disappoint you.

I studied Biology in Barcelona and worked for three years in the Department of Vertebrates at the faculty of Biology, specializing in Ichthyology and Cetology. But my interest in the sounds of birds and nature truly sparked when I began collaborating with my ornithologist partner on fieldwork for the first Atlas of Bird Nesting in Catalonia and Andorra (1983). I began recording in the late 1980s when I met Jean Roché

in France. He was the one who sparked in me the desire to record birdsong after hearing extraordinary recordings in his studio. It was a pleasure to watch him work with his extremely fine ear, in his studio surrounded by tape recorders, and I quickly became drawn to the world of sound, from fieldwork to final production. Thanks to him, I learned to listen, to make my first recordings, to work in the studio, and he encouraged me to publish my material. Roché left us a few months ago. He was a great lover of birds and their music, and an intuitive naturalist. With his passing, a key figure for many people in the understanding and dissemination of birdsongs, with the publication of his sound guides and the dissemination of what he called "nature concerts" through recreations of soundscapes with a clear musical inspiration.

In my beginnings, my main objective was to record the repertoires of the common species and very soon I also went in search of other less frequent species or even those that require authorisation and contact with species protection organisations: Dupont's lark in steppe landscapes and very threatened environments, Balearic shearwater in the Balearic Islands, the different species of Reed Bunting from the east and the west of Spain, the capercaillie in the Pyrenees, bearded vulture also in the Pyrenees, the Majorcan midwife toad, an endemic toad of the island of Mallorca with a very small population, birds of Canary Islands, the Iberian lynx in Andalusia in the south of Spain... Making the recordings, both of the common species and of the "special" ones required a personal and economic effort that I assumed with enthusiasm, without more help than some logistics and financial

help in certain cases. One of the projects that required the greatest effort from me—and that I could not have advanced without the collaboration of the team working on the Ex-situ Lynx Recovery Project—was the recording of the vocal repertoire of the Iberian lynx, a species that at that time was in danger of extinction. The recording work involved long waits especially at night in winter, an effort that nowadays, with automatic recorders (ARU), would have been almost trivial.

Thanks to Dr. Gustav Peters, who patiently analysed the recordings, we were able to present a poster at the IBAC in La Rochelle with the description of the most common vocalizations of the lynx repertoire.

With my partner Francesc, we began to travel with the aim of getting to know and recording other landscapes: Malaysia 1989, Costa Rica 1990, Mauritania 1991, Brazil 1992 (2), Guatemala 1993 and 1994, Kenya and Tanzania 1995, Uruguay (1999), Morocco (2004, 2008), New Zealand (2006, 2008), Turkey (2010), India 2000-2017 (7 trips), Cameroon (2014), Oman (2019), Sabah (2019)... On these trips I had to face fauna, environments, and acoustic conditions very different from those in my country. I had to learn to listen in a new way: to locate sounds in tropical forests, to identify acoustically species we could not see, and to note them in my field notebook—for example, “Nold1 – tui-tui-tuiiii”, “Nold2 – xrip-tu-wiiit”. Remembering a song previously heard and recorded, thanks to these notes, and memorizing it was already a step forward. The ultimate goal was to link that unidentified song or call, that “Nold” recording, to a visual observation—something that did not always happen. In those early years, field guides paid very little attention to bird songs and calls, and of course there was no internet, no Xeno-canto, or other reference websites. This way of traveling in search of discovery was very exciting for me, and even now, listening to the recordings at home, transports me back to those places I visited and explored. Each time, it feels like an immersion in the landscape.



Above: Introductory workshop on recording nature sounds. Recorders, microphones and field techniques. 2024

As my collection of sounds grew, I published some

identification CDs about Spanish fauna, birds, amphibians in collaboration with the National Museum of Natural Sciences, mammals with the collaboration of other authors, and even about crickets and grasshoppers, among other titles. In 1991 we published with the collaboration of Jean Roché a first CD about the tropical forests of Costa Rica, with recordings that were intended to recreate the sound “atmosphere” of different places and moments, and in which we incorporated descriptive texts of the context of the recordings and the most relevant species. This first CD was followed by others on Guatemala, Brazil (Mata Atlántica and Pantanal), Kenya & Tanzania and Spain.

Me and the WSRS

In the early 1980s an incipient Sound Library had been created in the Natural Science Museum of Barcelona, under the responsibility of Anna Omedes and it was there where with great enthusiasm I made my first donations of sounds. However, the Sound Library closed a few years later. Fortunately, Omedes told me about the WSRS (she herself had belonged to the society for a while), and shortly afterwards I met François Charron who also facilitated the contact of the WSRS. That is how I enrolled and my first bulletin is from 1994.

Receiving the Journals and the Circulating tapes were for me happy events, an opportunity not only to learn but also to enjoy a certain sense of connection with peers, since in Spain I had practically none, except for my colleague and good friend Carlos de Hita, with whom we coincided in our mutual beginnings. Later on, I even ventured to attend a meeting in Barnacros, it was a whole adventure to reach the cottage by public transport from Spain for a weekend. Afterwards, came a recording meeting in November in Solway Estuary, and a memorable spring outing to Skokholm (2016). But I also had the pleasure of sharing a trip with some of you to Macedonia (2011) and to Finland (2013), and also accompanying some colleagues on trips through Spain (2007), the last one precisely this last spring. And in 2012 I attended a Chris Watson workshop organized by Touch in Norfolk. A whole experience to meet Chris, sound artists and sound recordists, very young people



Above: In the Catalan Pyrenees, entering the forest in spring, 2021

and with a way of perceiving the sound environment very different from mine, more ornithological. All these personal contacts were very fruitful in which I discovered other ways of listening, of perceiving and of recording the sounds of nature. For me, who has always worked very solitary, these encounters, besides being useful, are very fun experiences. And personally, they're highly recommended.

Throughout my career as a recordist, my way of perceiving the sound of nature has evolved. At the beginning, I wished to capture the sound of each species in an isolated and pristine way, creating a collection of bird and other animal sounds. However, I soon understood that this way of listening and recording did not reflect reality. From recording species in an isolated way, I moved to seek the soundscape, approaching nature in a way different from visual contemplation. And I have even come to accept the presence of anthropogenic sound as part of certain soundscapes.

Listening opens a window to imagination, moves us emotionally and helps us to "enter" into that landscape and feel ourselves as one more living being, and I think it can lead us to a more respectful, humble relationship with nature, moving away from the attitude of dominance of our society. And in this path of discovery and change I have found inspiration in biologists, sound recordists, artists and philosophers.

Recordings in my website <http://www.eloisamatheu.com>

This website uses Catalan as the original language and we use Google Translator for other languages. You may find errors in the names of the animals and in some words or phrases in the text. Therefore, I apologise for any translation errors, an impossible task to tackle if it is not done

automatically. Thank you.

At dawn in the wastelands of Belchite
<https://www.eloisamatheu.com/ca/projectes/recording/trenc-dalba-als-erms-de-belchite-dawn-wastelands-belchite>

Rufous-tailed scrub robin
<https://www.eloisamatheu.com/ca/projectes/recording/cuaenlirat-alzacola-rufous-tailed-scrub-robin>

The tropical forest at dawn, PN Lobéké, Cameroon
<https://www.eloisamatheu.com/ca/projectes/camerun-la-selva-dels-pigmeus/recording/el-bosc-tropical-de-matinada-camerun>

Jungle Lore Birding Lodge, soundscape, North India
<https://www.eloisamatheu.com/ca/projectes/india/recording/jungle-lore-birding-lodge>

Lar Gibbon or White-handed gibbon
<https://www.eloisamatheu.com/ca/projectes/recording/gibo-de-mans-blancues-gibon-de-manos-blancas-lar-gibbon>

Cicadas at dusk in the tropical forest, Borneo
<https://www.eloisamatheu.com/ca/projectes/sabah-borneo-cigales-tropicals/recording/les-cigales-del-capvespre-al-bosc-tropical>

Some recordings in xeno-canto:

Ephippiger diurnus cunii
<https://xeno-canto.org/926960>

Neocallicrania selligera
<https://xeno-canto.org/934299>



Above: Recording trip through Spain by members of the WSRS: Allan Haigthon, Gordon Edgar, Ian Todd, Robert Malpas and myself. The photo was taken by Anna Tenés, in Extremadura, spring 2007. A journey of exploration of species and soundscapes

Wildlife Sound Recording in Holland for the BBC in 1963.

Part 2.

by John F. Burton

In my previous article in this journal (2025, vol. 16, pp. 34-38) about sound recording in Holland in 1963, I concluded by stating that recording engineer Bob Wade and I were just about to transfer our sound recording activities from the Veluwezoom to the Hoge Yeluwe national park and the then recently drained Zuider Zee (Ijsselmeer) polder of Oost Flevoland.

On Sunday, 9th June, we drove to the national park with the hope of recording Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* and Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*. Back in 1956 I had been shown a Goshawk's nest here, placed high in a tall tree. We managed to find the same tree, still occupied by a pair of these birds. Unfortunately, although the female appeared to be still sitting, we failed to obtain any sound recordings as she remained silent during a long watch by us and the male never appeared while we were present. We returned next morning with the same negative results. So we had to be content with making atmosphere recordings of the largely coniferous forest, featuring such birds as Nuthatch *Sitta eropaea*, Tree Creeper *Certhia familiaris*, Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*, Blue Cyanistes *caruleus*, Great Parus *major* and Marsh *Poecile palustris* Tits, and Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* and the repeated bark of a Roebuck *Capreolus capreolus*.

Our next quarry was the Wryneck, a fast declining species in north-west Europe. I had been told that a pair was breeding in the Hope Veluwe and had been given the name and address of one of the wardens who knew where the nest was. Bob and I drove to his house and he very kindly took us to a pleasant area of birch woodland where the pair were nesting in a nestbox just over a metre above the ground. It contained three eggs. We wanted to record nestlings,

so we planned to return at a later date. Sadly we were frustrated as the eggs were stolen in the meantime.

It was now time to switch our operations to Oost (East) Flevoland and see how our colleagues were getting on with their filming and see if they needed anything more to be sound recorded. On our arrival in Kamperhoek we learned that everything was going well in ideal weather conditions. They had found another two nests with eggs of Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* and in the course of a walk around this large sand-bank I chanced upon a nest of Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* with 3 eggs and an empty nest scrape of Little Ringed Plover *C. dubius* that they had missed. In a pile of rocks on the dyke wall I came across a pair of White Wagtails *Motacilla a. alba* feeding fledglings.

After a picnic lunch I sat on the bank overlooking a vast reedbed, watching the resident Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* quartering back and forth, low over the reeds, when I became aware that there were an awful lot of Four-spotted Darter Dragonflies *Libellula quadrimaculata* flying about. Then I noticed that they were all flying in the same direction — to the east. So I realised it was one of the famous large scale movements of this species. Later, when I got back to the U.K., I learned that this migration had been observed in several parts of north-west Europe, so I collected all these reports together and eventually published them in an academic paper in the British entomological journal The Entomologist's Record and Journal of Variation (Burton, 1996).

In a part of this polder Bob and I had noticed a lot of birds in a freshly cut hayfield on the opposite side of the dyke road from the Veluwemeer and I drew producer

Ron Webster's attention to it. He sent cameraman Mike Aldridge to film them. There were Oystercatchers *Himantopus ostralegus*, Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus*, Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa*, Redshanks *Tringa totanus* and a large party of Ruffs and Reeves *Calidris pugnax*. Mike filmed them using a camera with long-focus lenses mounted on the roof of his car. He also wished to get close-up shots of a handsome male Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla f. flava*, but was finding it difficult to obtain really close-up shots, even when stalking it lying on the ground. It was then that I remembered that I had a stuffed Little Owl *Athene noctua* in our Land Rover, so I went and got it and it worked perfectly. As soon as I placed it near Mike the wagtail immediately approached and Mike secured all the close-up pictures he wanted. In the meantime Bob and I took the opportunity to make recordings of the alarm and anxiety calls of the godwits.

Early the next morning we drove to an area of open water in an immense reed bed where Ron Webster wished to film a breeding colony of Black-headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*. With the film crew on board, Bob Wade drove confidently along a muddy track through the reeds. But the track became muddier and wetter as we neared the open water until

we eventually became firmly stuck up to the axles in the thick black mud. We all jumped out except for Bob who tried unsuccessfully to reverse out of the mud. We looked around for something solid to place behind the wheels to give them grip. The only material available were the reeds; so we cut armfuls and these eventually allowed Bob to extricate the Land Rover.

Having freed our vehicle and found firmer ground, we then noticed that a large fire was engulfing the reeds about a mile away. We became rather worried when we saw that the breeze was steadily blowing the flames towards us. There was some talk of giving up the attempt to reach the gull colony. But, after a while, we saw that the fire seemed to have been got under control and no longer threatened, so we pressed on towards it. We laid down more reeds under the Land Rover and Bob drove cautiously forward and we all clambered aboard with our gear and reached the colony without further mishap.

Our arrival at the Black-headed Gull colony was greeted by a swirling, loudly clamouring cloud of these birds, plus some Common Terns *Sterna hirundo*. Their nests were scattered everywhere on the ground around the edges of the 'lake'. We were



View over Oostelijk Flevoland, 2nd June 1980.

NL/BW/80/28

Photos: J.F. GUNTON

soon busy filming and making sound recordings of the adults and young and the general scene. Some nests still contained eggs. When Bob and I had finished taping the sounds of the gull colony on our Nagra 111b tape recorder, we looked around at the other birds inhabiting the open water and its protective reed cover: Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, a drake Pochard *Aythya ferina*, a pair of Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus*, several Ruffs, Reed Buntings *Emberiza schoeniclus*, Great Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*, Reed *A. scirpaceus* and Sedge Warblers *A. schoenobaenus*. But the noise from the gull colony made it impractical to make individual recordings of them. Soon we all had enough material and left to let the birds settle back at their nests. The way back to firm ground was trouble free as this time Bob drove with great caution,

On another early morning Bob and I made recording of nesting Black Terns *Chelidonias niger* at a watery site elsewhere in this huge area of reed marsh. We secured very satisfactory recordings of the alarm and anxiety cries of the adults. One afternoon we decided to make recordings of a brood of young Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* in a nestbox that ecologist Dr. Cavé had shown us earlier on. We picked him up from his house en route as he had told us that he now wished to ring them. As we bumped along a rough track beside a canal the female glided away as we approached the nest box erected on a tree at the edge of a plantation of young conifers.

First of all we made recordings of the male circling overhead calling anxiously; then of the four youngsters being ringed by Dr. Cavé. In our recording you can just hear the male above the din created by the young falcons. After we had returned them to the nest box and Dr. Cavé had left for home, Bob and I concealed a microphone at the end of a length of cable that led to the Leavers-Rich tape recorder in our Land Rover some distance away. Here we waited inside for the male to return with food for the young, which he did on our apparent disappearance. In about half-an-hour he returned with a vole in his talons. As I watched through my binoculars, the female flew out from the trees and rose to meet him and took the vole from him. Meanwhile Bob had switched on the recorder and recorded the food transfer. Unfortunately the pair were too high up for a satisfactory result, but we successfully recorded the female feeding the hungry youngsters.

While we waited for a repeat performance there was plenty to occupy our attention along the adjacent canal: Edible Frogs *Pelophylax esculentus* croaked, while overhead Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* sang unceasingly and Curlews *Numenius arquata* and Oystercatchers and a Cuckoo *Cucula canorus* called intermittently in the distance. All these atmospheric sounds we taped. Once a group of Oystercatchers sped towards us, flying low over the trees, close past us, loudly wickering in communal display flight. Suddenly they wheeled around and flew low over us again and disappeared behind the plantation, providing us with a splendid if

fortunate and unexpected recording. We noticed as we waited there that one of the Skylarks was including mimicry of the song of a Reed Bunting in its song flight and we recorded that too.

All this passed the time most agreeably, but since after an hour the male Kestrel had not returned with prey and as we already had good recordings of the young being fed, we decided to pack up and return to our hotel in Zwolle. On 25th June the day dawned bright but soon became cloudy as we drove along the motorway to Amsterdam where we were due to lunch with my friend, journalist and ornithologist Ko Zweeres, then Secretary of the Dutch Society for the Protection of Birds. The next two days were the last before we were due to return to England and we had arranged to spend them working on the broad dunes of the North Sea coast around Bergen-an-Zee. Our guide was another Dutch friend of mine, Jan Ivangh, whom I had first met on a bird-watching trip to Holland in 1954. For some years he was a member of the WSRS; but sadly died several years ago. With his help I had hoped to make recordings of the Crested Lark *Galeida cristata*, but the fine weather had come to an end at last and had turned mainly wet and very windy, and frustrated us.

Jan had arranged for us to stay in a very comfortable bed and breakfast pension and at 4.30 next morning, June 27th, he drove me in his caravanette to a spot where we soon found two of these larks feeding along a roadside gutter. This species has a distinctive liquid-sounding tri-syllable call that these two birds uttered a few times, but the very strong south-easterly wind blowing off the sea made satisfactory sound recording impossible.

After breakfast Jan and I collected Bob and Jan led us to see the coastal nature reserve that he managed back in 1954 when I first met him. The shallow pool there was teeming with the usual species, plus a dozen Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodea*. Unfortunately the south-east wind was still too strong for satisfactory recording. We then drove on to an area of old dunes near Bergen-an-Zee which had been partly colonised by conifers and heathland plants. Here in one of the large slacks with pools we settled down by one that was sheltered from the wind, especially as it was fringed by Scots Pines *Pinus sylvestris*. It was full of fish and Edible Frogs. The sun had come out by now and the fish were rising audibly and the frogs were croaking noisily, so we decided to make recordings. It was very pleasant sitting in the shade of the small trees (it was now hot) and listening to the songs of Garden Warblers *Sylvia borin* and Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus*, the flutey notes of a Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* and the purring of Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur*. Listening through our headphones we were suddenly startled by the loud, shrill "kik-kik-kik" cries of a Common Tern that appeared over the pool and began fishing. It circled around at about 5 metres above the water surface. It made several dives, finally emerging with a Rudd *Scardinius erythrophthalmus*. All this we recorded very

successfully as well as the general atmosphere of the location. The tern immediately flew off with its prize to feed its offspring somewhere on the dunes out of our sight. After it had returned and caught another fish and then departed, we decided to call it a day. We three also departed – to a nice restaurant in Bergen.

Next day Jan and I were again outdoors by 4.30 am. In contrast to the previous afternoon, the weather was wet and windy as we drove to the same place as the previous day in another attempt to record the Crested Larks. We found them in the same spot but the very gusty wind and the rain put paid to any hopes we had of recording them. After watching them from Jan's caravanette we drove to the high dunes at Camperduin. Here one of the large dune slacks had a pair of breeding Curlews. They flew up and circled around us uttering their arresting anxiety and alarm calls, sometimes alighting on the dune tops and yodelling their beautiful "cour-lee" cries. I contrived to shelter my microphone in a hollow beneath a clump of marram grass from the unremitting wind and rain, but it was of no avail and the recordings I made were spoilt. All that was worth keeping when I got back to Bristol was 25 seconds of Lapwing flight calls as the nearby breeding pair happened to fly low over my head during a drop in the wind force between gusts.

By then Jan and I were very wet and hungry and, since there was no sign of the wind or rain abating,

or sign of a brightening of the leaden grey sky above the desolate dunes, we packed it in. So ended in this cheerless weather what had been a highly enjoyable and profitable period of sound recording that had begun in a heatwave of sunshine. Altogether we had been able to add to the BBC Sound Archives new recordings of 18 species of birds, not counting those like the Kentish Plover featuring in atmosphere recordings; also recordings of Wild Boar, Roe Deer, Edible Frog and many atmosphere recordings of various habitats. These were our reflections during a substantial breakfast, after which Bob and I took our leave of Jan Ivangh and headed off for the Hook of Holland and the night ferry for Harwich.

Reference

Burton, J.F. 1996. A migration of the dragonfly *Libellula quadrimaculata* Linnaeus 1758 (Odonata: Libellulidae) in North-west Europe in 1963. *Atalanta* 27: 175-187.

(https://www.zobodat.at/pdf/Atalanta_27_0175-0187.pdf)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-5981-889X>



The Cranes of Willow Tree Fen



by Terry Barnatt

April 2020, Covid Lockdown. I extended my cycling exercise ten miles to a local wetland reserve: Willow Tree Fen – between Bourne and Spalding in South Lincolnshire. As I arrived at the reserve I found John, Reserve Warden, on the scene. We exchanged pleasantries, maintaining our covid distance, and as we spoke I heard distant calls from the reedbed on the far side of the reserve. 'That sounds like a Crane bugling' I exclaimed. John had heard the Crane calls the evening before and was just checking to see if they were still present and now, we had confirmation. The Cranes had landed!



Above: The Reserve Sign.

Willow Tree Farm, as it was until 2009, consisted of farm buildings and two large arable fields covering 274 low-lying acres. The Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust then purchased it in the hope of turning it into a wetland reserve. The farm was bounded by the embanked River Glen (fenland rivers carry water across the fens between high banks) and a substantial drain called the Counterdrain. The area between, such as this farm, is on washlands which could, in an emergency, be flooded from the river and retained between the two

waterways. Along the bottom of the riverbank, and part of the reserve, are narrow reeded pits – borrow pits – dug when the river was originally banked, along with two extensive reed-lined pools. This habitat already attracted waterbirds, such as Moorhens, Coots, Reed and Sedge Warblers.



Through 2010 and the next two years various works were carried out, such as removing field drains and fencing and the land began to revert to a marshy wetland, with sedges and rushes. A couple of hides were erected in the reedbeds, and by 2013, it was already an established wetland reserve and beginning to serve the original purpose. I visited regularly and took the opportunity to make recordings, when conditions were suitable.

Early in March 2014 I was on the reserve, not recording, when two Cranes circled over the reeds calling beautifully but after a couple of circuits they made off into the distance. It may be that the presence of a Trust work party decided them not to settle that day. In the same year we had visits from scarcities such as Black Terns, a Glossy ibis, a Black-winged Stilt and a Red-footed Falcon. Lapwings, Snipe and Shelduck along with other wildfowl were now using



Above: Early Morning on the Reserve



Above: View from a Hide in the Early Days of the Reserve

the reserve throughout the year with addition of Cetti's Warblers and our other residents. One Spring I was lucky enough to come across a pair of Bearded Tits and I even had a recorder, and camera, with me! They did not stay but we hope they return some time to breed. In winter Whooper Swans were giving me some good recording opportunities, again, 'when conditions allowed'. Just when I think I have chosen a nice quiet morning I find that surrounding farmers also choose an early start and with the powerful tractors they use in the fens these days their sound travels a considerable distance. Perhaps there may be a market for tractor recordings?

In 2017 we had a surge of interest in March when a male Bluethroat spent a few weeks on Willow Tree, in reeds along the side of the main track across the reserve. It was practising singing – subsong - with variable success, but during normal daylight hours it was impossible to consider trying to record because of so many big-lens visitors. I did take some pictures of it

of course but I was quite concerned at some efforts to get a close shot. I managed some really early morning visits before the arrival of the photo army and did get some recordings. In comparison to most WSRS members' recordings my results were not remarkable but for me they remain a memory of an unusual bird in an unusual situation and I don't suppose many Bluethroats have been recorded singing in England – however poorly.

In 2020 the arrival of the Cranes, as I described, caused both excitement and concern. Warden John quickly organised Crane Watch, a rota of watchers to look after the reserve, from dawn to dusk – I was included on the team. This was primarily for security, making sure that no one entered the reserve to cause disturbance. People were still trying to walk their dogs on the site, despite Covid lockdown. We were able to travel to the reserve because we had a purpose to make the journey. We had to maintain the 2m distance rule and parked on the bridge at the reserve entrance.

The Cranes did stay, settled down to nest in the far reaches of the reserve, and one chick was seen in June and it began to fly in early August and the first breeding attempt of the Crane in Lincolnshire in 400 years had been a success - and I had managed to make one or two distant recordings during this first historic year.



Above: Male Crane

The trio left the reserve during October and it is most likely that they flew to the Nene Washes, about twenty miles south, to join an established breeding and wintering group of Cranes. I have recorded Cranes on visits to this RSPB reserve over the past twelve years or so.

On 22nd January I was again present, but again not recording, when eight Cranes circled around the reserve bugling away and then off into the distance. One of them was a juvenile and it seemed to me that our family was amongst them and by the middle of February two adults and the juvenile were back on station. The adults chased off the youngster on 2nd March.

Crane Watch21 began. My three-hour watch started at 7am and I had some chilly, but worthwhile, mornings in the exposed fens. In late April two small chicks were seen with the busy parents but unfortunately, in early May, following a day or two of very cold, wet weather, both chicks were lost. The adults stayed on site and visitors still continued to come to the reserve. Crane Watch continued through to the end of Summer. By now we had several pairs of Marsh Harriers breeding in the reeds as well. In fact, Crane calls were very limited in the first year or so and because, like everyone else, I was not able to go on to the reserve, my recording efforts were confined to the car park,

using my parabolic.



Above: We Endured a Variety of Weather during Crane Watch

During the winter the reserve was re-worked and a long track dividing the reserve in half was removed and the resulting gravel /stone material was re-cycled to create a new, elevated car park overlooking a new pool and giving everyone a fine view across the reserve. Heavy security gates were put in place so that we could keep out the 'invading hordes' -- and we also had a new Crane Watch HQ (a shed) and a toilet!

In 2022 the two Cranes returned on 7th February and another pair also tried to establish a territory but after a lot of very aggressive interaction the 'intruders' left. I was able to get some recordings, and camera shots, of this action, though conditions were not entirely suitable for decent recording, with other watchers present and very close-by. The site is challenging for recording being very exposed, usually quite breezy and affected by the activities at a nearby farm and a distant, but busy, road.

Crane watchers were pleased to see two chicks on 1st April, both flourished and they flew on 1st July, but still spent much time on and around the reserve. The Cranes overwintered on the reserve with as many as 14 present on some occasions, making it a popular venue and giving visitors the chance to see the birds come to roost in the evenings, with much bugling, after spending time out on fenland fields. On most of my evening visits I was unsuccessful with recordings because of weather conditions or, understandably, excited spectators.

In February 2023 the previous breeding pair settled down on to their territory and chased off their chicks. Two other pairs also managed to set up territories after a great deal of disagreement. This on a site, we were originally advised, was hardly large enough for one pair to breed! Crane Watch23 therefore was much more eventful than previous years.

I did get agreement from Warden John to access the reserve itself to do some recording. I could do so by using a reserve track along the riverbank, which was almost entirely bounded by high reeds, thus causing no disturbance to the wildlife. However, to get to the reserve entrance, guarded by another security gate (I had the key), I had to park my car about a mile away on a narrow fen lane and, on my mountain bike, transport myself, recorder, mic and cable, tripod, camera and sustenance, along a really terrible, uneven track. Few

venture down it with ordinary motor vehicles – it is a white-knuckle ride. From this quieter area of Willow Tree Fen, I did manage to get some soundscape recordings, featuring Reed and Sedge Warblers, Water Rails, Cetti's Warblers and a Bittern, along with some intimate contact sounds made by the breeding Cranes. I called these sounds 'crackles'. Although there had been plenty to see and hear in 2023 the Cranes had what can only be described as an indifferent breeding season. Our original pair had two chicks and they flew successfully on 1st July. However, both of the 'new' pairs hatched two chicks but all four were lost very early on – perhaps because they were first-time, inexperienced, breeders? No one was able to discover the reasons for the losses, but they were thought to be caused either predation or poor weather.



Above: Early Season Action before settling on Territories



Above: Morning Flight

Again, all the residents stayed on or nearby the reserve, and during the 2023/24 winter up to 40 Cranes were present at roosting times. So, there were plenty of evening Crane watches. I made several efforts to get flight calls as they roosted and I was able to get a reasonable recording of them one evening and another from the reserve early one morning as they left. But as we recordists all know plans don't always work out and I spent some frustrating visits with low flying Cranes passing over me – in silence!

We see Little Egrets regularly and we have had Cattle Egrets occasionally strutting about on the grazing area.

Great White Egrets also grace us with their presence quite often and we are wondering if, or when, they are likely to nest in the reedbeds. We often see several Roe Deer on our watches and one morning a particularly fine Roebuck stood close-by watching me, allowing a good photo-shot. On my early recording visits, I have come across Otters on the quiet waterways of the reserve.



Above: Another Elegant Visitor - The Great White Egret



Above: This fine Roebuck watched me all morning



Above: Early Morning Otter



Growing up - Crane Adult and Chick



Adult with two Young Crane

Crane Watch24 began after three pairs again set up territories in February. Again, our original pair returned, but with only one youngster, which they promptly chased away. They nested in a reedbed not far from the car park and appeared, in full view of watchers, with two chicks, on 31st March. Unfortunately, one of the youngsters was lost, again the cause was unknown. The remaining youngster flew on 1st July. A second pair had one chick which flew on 7th July and the last pair, although we were sure they nested, failed to produce chicks. Because we had volunteers on the spot throughout the season, and manager John made on-site observations, we had some idea from the activities of the adults when nesting had commenced and when hatching was expected. We have a particularly fine photographer on the Crane Watch team. He spent many, many hours on site taking some brilliant shots, documenting the lives of the birds and enabling us all to learn much more about the lives of our Cranes in



Crane Adult and Chicks



Fully Fledged Young Crane

the process. In the last couple of years one pair have become very accommodating and have often been seen within yards of the viewing area. Willow Tree Fen has become well known and we have had visitors from all over the country, who ask whether the Cranes are on view - and more often than not, they are.

I have been privileged to be involved with Crane Watch at Willow Tree Fen, been able to observe these magnificent birds at close quarters and to have had some special opportunities to record their wild voices. I will keep trying to find that 'right day' with the perfect background in the future.

As I write Crane Watch25 is in progress and at least one pair of Cranes have bred with the possibility of a second pair also nesting.



Above: Looking out across the Kafue

by Rob Bain

My first dedicated recording trip to Africa was a mixed success. Of the three locations visited in the South African province of Limpopo, only one - the Pungwe Safari Camp (<https://www.pungwe.co.za/>) in the Manyeleti Game Reserve (part of the Great Kruger National Park) - was quiet enough for me to record wildlife free from anthropogenic noise. The other locations were a game reserve in the Waterberg District (plagued by jeep noise from game viewers and anti-poaching patrols) and a stunning mountain pass which, unfortunately, suffered from distant traffic rumble. Better research was the lesson - although Pungwe meant I didn't come away empty handed. Great camp. Recordist-friendly. Highly recommended.

My research started upon my return and, with the help of Sarah Solomon (sounds@dereksolomon.com), we identified McBrides Camp in Zambia as a strong candidate in terms of being unaffected by human disturbance. I headed back to Africa in July 2025 with my recording gear for a nine-night stay.

McBrides Camp (<https://www.mcbridescamp.com/>) sits at the confluence of the Kafue and Mushingashi Rivers, deep in the Kafue National Park (the second largest national park in Africa). I transferred from my London overnight flight to Johannesburg onto a regional hopper to Zambia's capital, Lusaka. From there, a 22-year-old Texan ex-ferry pilot (!) transported me to the camp's grass strip, courtesy of a hot and stuffy Piper Comanche. The views from 8,000 feet were, however, breathtaking.

I was met at McBrides by super-friendly camp managers Greg and Adri. We had exchanged emails in advance, so they knew exactly why I was coming. And they could not have been more helpful, having discussed possible recording locations - in terms of habitat variety and recently reported wildlife sightings - before my arrival. Preparation certainly pays off!



Above: McBrides Camp Logo

My trip was planned to coincide with Zambia's dry season (May to October). During these months, the vegetation is less dense - good for photographers - and the wildlife congregates around the shrinking

water resources - good for me! Promising for the rich and diverse long-form soundscapes I'd hoped to capture. For me, recording wildlife is a probability play. As we all know, wildlife does not perform on command. However, you can tip probability in your favour through research, common sense planning and (critically) with the assistance of local guides. Employing drop rigs - Sony PCM-A10 recorders with LOM omnis - I used a mix of one, two and three-night deployments at different locations depending on how promising they looked and felt, and the difficulty of access. Additionally, I carry a Sony PCM-D100 as a 'grab rig'. Having this to hand means that it can be set-up immediately, anywhere interesting calls or vocalisations are heard.



Above: Rob's Field Recording Case

One of the best recording locations turned out to be close to McBrides itself. To my eternal gratitude, Greg and Adri made sure that the camp's generator and water pump were switched off until the dawn chorus had waned. They also delayed the start of some construction activity which was going on. These actions are indicative of the assistance I was afforded and the camp managers' commitment to ensuring that my stay was as productive as possible.

The camp itself is delightful. At its heart sits the lounge

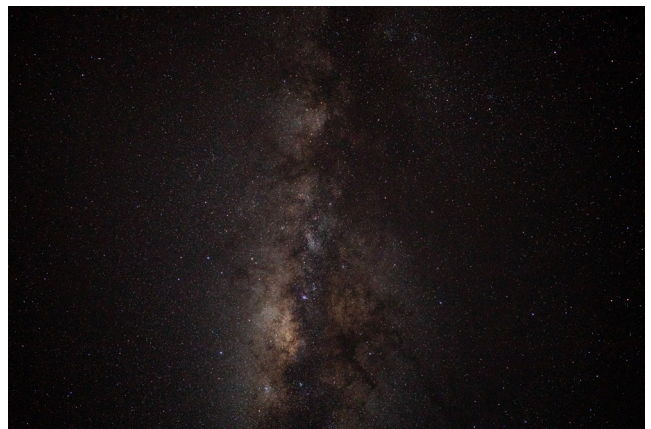
and dining area, looking out over the Kafue River with a resident pod of boisterous hippos and plentiful birdlife. Hippos invariably invade the unfenced camp at night - a little disconcerting at first to hear them shuffling and snuffling around, immediately outside your thinly-thatched chalet.



*Above: Hippo - Extremely Territorial and Aggressive
Below: My Thatched Chalet*



No one wanders too far unaccompanied during the hours of darkness. That said, I was able to enjoy some wide-field astrophotography in the pitch black outside my chalet. No light pollution here (Bortle 1 or 2). The Milky Way panoramas were majestic.



Above: Fantastic Dark Skies

Animal incursions were not restricted to night. One day, a parade of inquisitive elephants took up residence in the camp. Everyone stayed very still, the only sound

being the frequent release of camera shutters. Away went the long lenses and out came the wide angles. Oh - and did I mention the food? We were served the most delicious meals every day (kudos to camp cooks, Mark and Manfred).



Above: We Didn't Starve - Excellent Meals

As for my recordings, well - I'm still working through the hundreds of hours of material as work permits. Thank goodness for spectrograms! Earlier today I was listening to lion and hyena, against the soothing and ever-present cooing of Cape Turtle Doves (*Streptopelia capicola*). I've got more hippo recordings than I'll ever need, that's for sure. And, in between, I immediately recognised the Red-necked Spurfowl (*Pternistis afer*) and the extremely loud and distinctive Hadedda ibis (*Bostrychia hagedash*). All of which transports me back to McBrides simply by closing my eyes.

My short stay at McBrides Camp was not without some excitement. Having returned from a remote recording location by boat, we found that we were unable to dock due to the presence of a young, somewhat agitated male elephant by the jetty. That became a waiting game. And at another location, a lagoon, we were surprised by the speed and agility demonstrated by a massive, semi-submerged hippo who, before we knew it, scrambled on-land and positioned himself in front of us, impressing us with his tusk-like canines - a threat display. We survived.

Would I recommend McBrides to other wildlife sound recordists? It obviously depends on your interests but, generally, yes. In a heartbeat. Once you've done your first African safari and ticked off the 'Big Five', it's time to retreat back from the circus and experience proper Africa. McBrides is truly proper Africa.

Rob will be submitting a number of his Zambian recordings to the Society's Sound Magazine over the coming months.

A Further Selection of Photos from the Trip:



Above: Welcome to McBrides



Above: Rob and Pilot (Victoria) with Hosts Greg and Adri

Below: Rob and Victoria





Photos

1. View from the Camp
2. Trunk Wrestling (Social Bonding)
3. Final Deployment of the Day
4. Juvenile Saddle-billed Storks
5. Apex Predator, one of many
6. Last Pickup of the Day.



Beyond The Branches

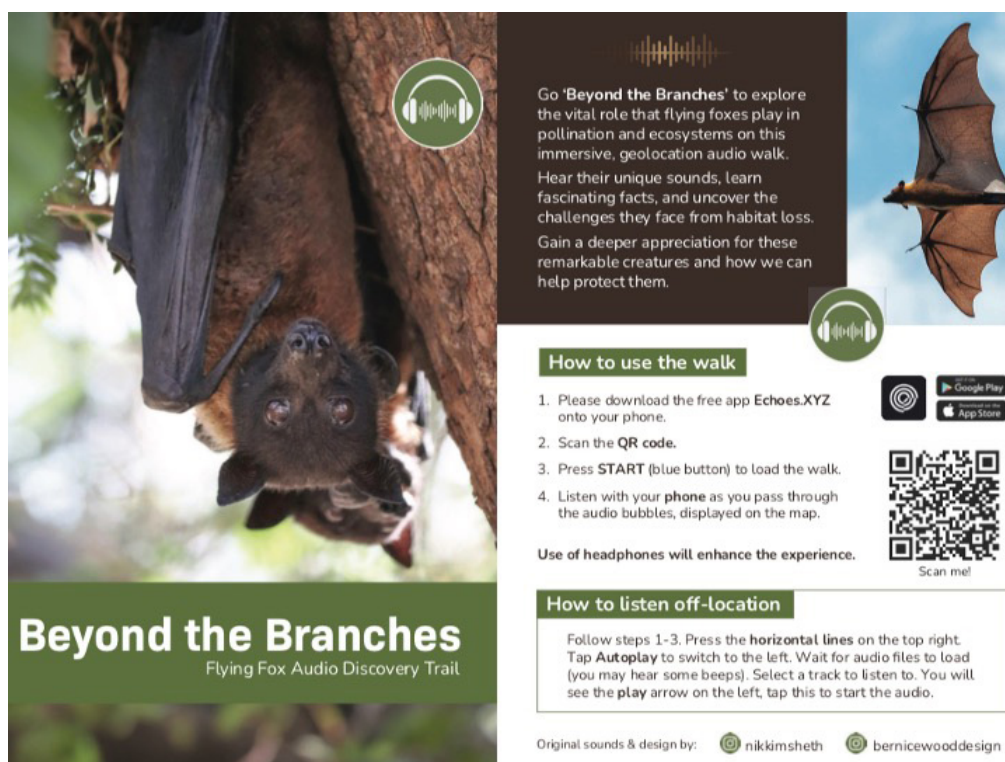
Transforming Negative Perspectives of Flying Foxes in South-East Queensland through Geolocative Sound

Above: A Resting Black Flying Fox at the Coolumb Beach Roost. Photo credit: Bernice Wood

by Dr Nikki Sheth and Bernice Wood.

Overview

'Beyond the Branches' is an immersive audio trail available on the echoes.xyz app, a mobile platform that allows users to experience geolocative audio walks. Using GPS, the app triggers sounds that respond to a listener's location, allowing participants to explore with their own device and headphones. This audio walk invites users to connect with flying foxes through sound, aiming to transform negative perspectives, increase community engagement with local biodiversity and educate listeners. It highlights the use of sound as a creative engagement tool towards ecological change and conservation.



Beyond the Branches
Flying Fox Audio Discovery Trail

Go 'Beyond the Branches' to explore the vital role that flying foxes play in pollination and ecosystems on this immersive, geolocation audio walk. Hear their unique sounds, learn fascinating facts, and uncover the challenges they face from habitat loss. Gain a deeper appreciation for these remarkable creatures and how we can help protect them.

How to use the walk

1. Please download the free app Echoes.XYZ onto your phone.
2. Scan the QR code.
3. Press **START** (blue button) to load the walk.
4. Listen with your **phone** as you pass through the audio bubbles, displayed on the map.

Use of headphones will enhance the experience.

How to listen off-location

Follow steps 1-3. Press the **horizontal lines** on the top right. Tap **Autoplay** to switch to the left. Wait for audio files to load (you may hear some beeps). Select a track to listen to. You will see the **play** arrow on the left, tap this to start the audio.

Original sounds & design by:  nikkimsheth  bernicewooddesign

Above: Beyond the Branches Flyer. Flyer design: Bernice Wood

The Project

The first iteration of the project was commissioned by the Sunshine Coast Council for the 10th Annual Australasian Bat Night in Maleny.



Above: Grey Headed Flying Foxes in Maleny on Bat Night. Photo credit: Nikki Sheth

Maleny is in the hinterland of the Sunshine Coast, known for its creative vibe, rolling hills and views of the Glasshouse Mountains. It is part of the UNESCO Sunshine Coast Biosphere, which is an area that encompasses the region's natural environment and aims to balance human needs with conservation efforts. It is also part of the only region in Australia and the world to contain three UNESCO biosphere reserve sites that uniquely exist side-by-side.

Typically, in Australia, flying foxes have a bad reputation with misinformation and negative perspectives being shared on mainstream media. They are seen as pests who are noisy, smelly and potential disease carriers, these creatures are hugely misunderstood. With populations declining in recent years and conservation efforts being affected by negative perspectives on the species, there is a movement to normalise flying foxes in the way in which they are portrayed, depicting them as a natural part of Australian wildlife in art, photography, books, community events and education and highlight a natural part of Australia's highly esteemed biodiversity.

One of the aims of the Sunshine Coast Regional Flying Fox Management Plan is to provide information to the public about flying foxes and their role in the ecosystem. As part of this objective, we were asked to create this audio walk as a way to connect and admire a roost through the sense of sound and break down intergenerational trauma and the narrative of fear associated with flying foxes.

On this immersive audio walk, you'll be transported into a rich soundscape that reveals the fascinating role these creatures play in our environment.

As you stroll, you'll encounter the distinct sounds of various flying fox species and even the echolocation of microbats. You'll discover surprising facts about their

behaviours and the essential role flying foxes play in maintaining balance in nature.

As you move deeper into the walk, you'll learn about the threats these creatures face such as habitat loss, climate change, and human-wildlife conflict and understand why they gather in such large numbers near urban areas. By the end, you'll discover how you can help protect these incredible animals and ensure their survival.



Above: Grey Headed Flying Foxes in Maleny. Photo credit: Bernice Wood

Aims

Using sound as an educational tool, the audio trail aims to challenge and alter stereotypical views, intergenerational trauma and negative perspectives towards flying foxes. As listeners gain a deeper understanding, knowledge and education of the species and the essential role they play in the ecosystem, through scientific facts and the audio narration, they are more likely to develop a greater appreciation and acceptance of the flying foxes. It is a way of engaging people with flying foxes through sound and creative practices and highlighting the use of sound as a creative engagement tool and its role in conservation. The walk also looks to break down the narrative of fear associated with flying foxes, by education and reframing the narrative to one of awe and wonder.

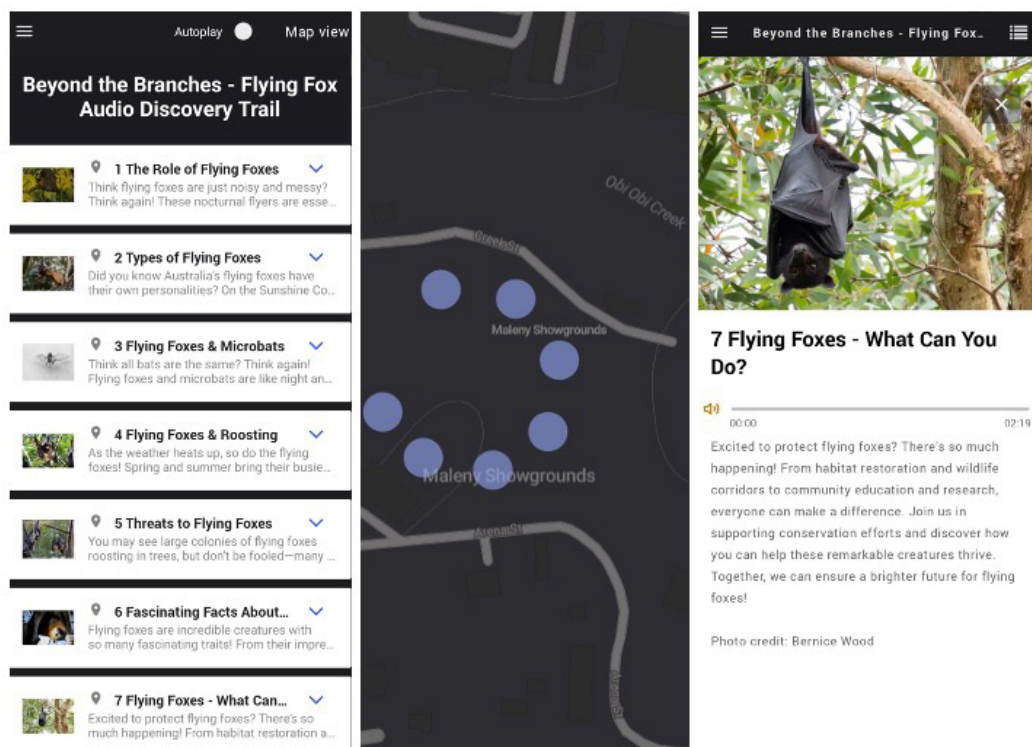
Additionally, the trail also allows audiences to engage with a species through a non-intrusive, low ecological impact, and highly accessible way. It is a way of connecting and admiring a roost through the sense of sound, that has no ecological impact of spooking animals and is more inclusive of those who cannot get to sites, due to it being available to remotely download and listen to offline.

The immersive nature of headphone listening ensures that the experience is both personal and engaging, allowing the listener to become fully absorbed in the sound, creating a powerful, reflective experience. This project sits at the intersection of art and science.



Above: Black Flying Foxes at Coolum Beach. Photo credit: Bernice Wood

Long term we hope to expand the project, creating new walks for new locations, focusing on specific species of flying foxes, as well as microbats and expanding the reach of the walk and research project in Australia and worldwide.



Above: App Interface

A Practical guide

The image shown on page 36 is of the app interface for the existing walk that took place at the Maleny showgrounds last year. We have loaded seven audio clips on the walk composed using environmental field recordings, audio narration and recordings of flying foxes we have taken ourselves. We then added GPS trigger points for each audio clip as shown by the circles on this map. Once you enter the geofenced areas the audio will play and you will see a short piece of text alongside hearing the audio clip. We timed it so that listeners have plenty of time to get to each of the listening points and can also experience the natural soundscape around them. Eventually we are hoping that this walk will move to the Obi Obi Walk, a location where there is a colony of grey headed flying foxes, so that listeners can experience viewing flying foxes along with the audio experience.



Above: Flying Fox at Night. Photo credit: Nikki Sheth



Above: Grey Headed Flying Foxes Fly Out in Maleny on Bat Night. Photo credit: Nikki Sheth

Audio

Please use the following QR code or link below to listen to the audio work for yourself!



Above: Beyond the Branches QR code

Link:

<https://explore.echoes.xyz/collections/sJibhNtwG3wC2MLu>

Biography

Australian Government (2022). Australia's Biosphere Reserves. Available at: <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/biodiversity/conservation/australias-biosphere-reserves>

Matthew Mo, Libby A. Timmiss, Tim Pearson, Maree Treadwell Kerr, Sera Steves, Justin A. Welbergen (2024). "Normalising" flying foxes: a bold vision for improving the public perceptions of our largest and most conspicuous bats. *Australian Zoologist*. 43 (4): 545–573. doi: <https://doi.org/10.7882/AZ.2024.001>

Sunshine Coast Council (2025). Regional Flying Fox Management Plan. Available at: <https://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/council/planning-and-projects/council-plans/flying-fox-management#:~:text=Options%20available%20to%20council%20to%20respond%20to,and%20early%20intervention%20if%20necessary%20or%20possible>

The Guardian (2025). Australia's flying foxes are 'curious, gentle and intelligent'. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jan/03/australia-flying-foxes-endangered-species-list>

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Gubbi Gubbi (Kabi Kabi) / Jinibara people, traditional custodians of the Sunshine Coast, and recognise and pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

Special thanks to Arwen Brown, Tyron de Kauwe and Dr Leah Barclay for their input on this project.

Artist Biographies

Nikki Sheth is an internationally recognised sound artist and composer. Her work aims to give voice to the environment and foster a deeper connection with the natural world through field recordings, soundscape composition and spatial audio installations. Her interests in environmental sound include interspecies communication, nocturnal soundscapes and acoustic ecology - the relationship between sound and humans. She was nominated for Ivor Novello Composer Award (2021), winner of the Leah Reid Award from the International Alliance for Women in Music (2023) and winner of the Wildlife Sound Recording Society Creative Class Competition (2024). Described by The Wire Magazine as ‘dark, murky and mysterious, but also gorgeously trippy, enchanting and utterly alluring’, her work has been played at Quench Gallery (Margate), Kings Place (London) and Ars Electronica (Austria) as well as on BBC Radio 3. Nikki holds a PhD in Musical Composition from The University of Birmingham. In 2024 she was a Visiting Research Fellow at the University of the Sunshine Coast supported by the SCCA for the research project ‘Visualising Nocturnal Soundscapes’ and this summer she has an 8-channel installation, ‘Midnight Harmonies: Szumin’, exhibited in the Warsaw Museum of Modern Art commissioned by The Wapping Project and British Council Poland.

Website: <https://nikkisheth.myportfolio.com/>

Bernice Wood is a visual communications designer, environmental photographer, and sound artist whose work reveals the often unseen and unheard worlds within nature. With over two decades of photography experience, she blends imagery and sound to create immersive experiences inspired by curiosity, wonder, and a deep ecological connection.

As a dedicated volunteer at the Maroochy Wetlands Sanctuary, Bernice draws on careful observation and creative storytelling to deepen public engagement with the environment. Her projects often merge art and science, from developing geolocate audio trails that reveal hidden soundscapes to leading workshops that invite communities to experience nature through photography and listening.

She recently collaborated with Sunshine Coast Council to develop an audio trail that brings the wetlands’ hidden soundscapes and rich history to life, carefully designed to minimise environmental impact and ensure only a small footprint on the natural surroundings.

Bernice is currently completing her Master’s in Creative Arts at the University of the Sunshine Coast, where her work explores ecological themes through interactive media.

Website: <https://www.bernicewooddesign.com/>



Beyond the Branches - Flying Fox Audio Discovery Trail

📍 7 ECHOES

Location: Maleny, Queensland, Australia

‘Beyond the Branches’ is a project created by Nikki Sheth and Bernice Wood, where the listener will discover the incredible world of flying foxes?

So, get ready for an audio walk that will immerse you in the captivating world of flying foxes! As you listen, you’ll uncover how these misunderstood creatures aren’t just noisy neighbours, but vital to Australia’s ecosystem. Along the way, learn fascinating facts about their lives and how you can help protect them!

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we stand, recognise and pay respect to Elders past, present, and emerging.

Please listen via headphones for an immersive listening experience.

Image credit: Bernice Wood



Nikki Sheth

DOWNLOAD OUR APP TO DISCOVER THIS TOUR AND MANY OTHERS.





by David Bissett

One February morning in 2024, while approaching Golden Gates Lakes, near Stanford-le-Hope in Essex, an area managed by Essex Wildlife Trust, I heard what I thought was a chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*) calling from small trees adjacent to the main lake. I made a recording with the parabolic and Zoom F6. When the bird eventually became visible, it was clearly a great tit (*Parus major*), which was something of a surprise.

The recording can be heard here:

<https://xeno-canto.org/875341>.

There is something of a joke amongst birders that if you hear an unrecognised call, there is a good chance it will be a great tit. For a bird that appears to have relatively simple song and calls, it can produce a wide range of different sound combinations (Verboom, 2009).

As a matter of interest, I used the smartphone app, Merlin from Cornell Lab, to see what it made of the call, correctly identifying it as great tit. To check it can identify a chiffchaff call, I tried Merlin with recordings that were known to be chiffchaff, correctly identifying all with no difficulty. This has prompted the examination of the sonogram of this recording, comparing it with a known chiffchaff call.

Before continuing, I should say that the main reason for starting recording birds was to improve my own understanding and identification of the songs and calls of birds. The initial focus was on birdsong, though it became clear calls were every bit as important. In fact,

arguably, more important as song may be seasonal, whereas calls are less so. Amongst the earliest calls I committed to memory was that of the chiffchaff, particularly noting the difference between *P. collybita* and its relative the willow warbler (*P. trochilus*). It also has to be said that I am not an expert when it comes to analysing sonograms and feel as though I am still very much in the learning phase. It is in this spirit of learning that this investigation has taken place.

The first two calls I looked at I recorded personally, and the second pair of recordings were obtained from <https://xeno-canto.org/> and referenced accordingly.

The sonograms shown here were made using Kaleidoscope Lite in the non-bat analysis mode and the measurements were made with Raven Lite 2. Both are free in the lite versions. This choice was made as the sonograms in Kaleidoscope Lite tend to be clearer and easier to work with but, though measurements can be made in Kaleidoscope Lite, this is easier to manage in Raven Lite 2. These are, of course, personal opinions and others may have other views on this.

Figure one shows the sonogram for the recording noted above and figure two shows the sonogram of a chiffchaff call recorded in August 2022. The level of zoom in Kaleidoscope Lite was maintained to enable visual comparison.

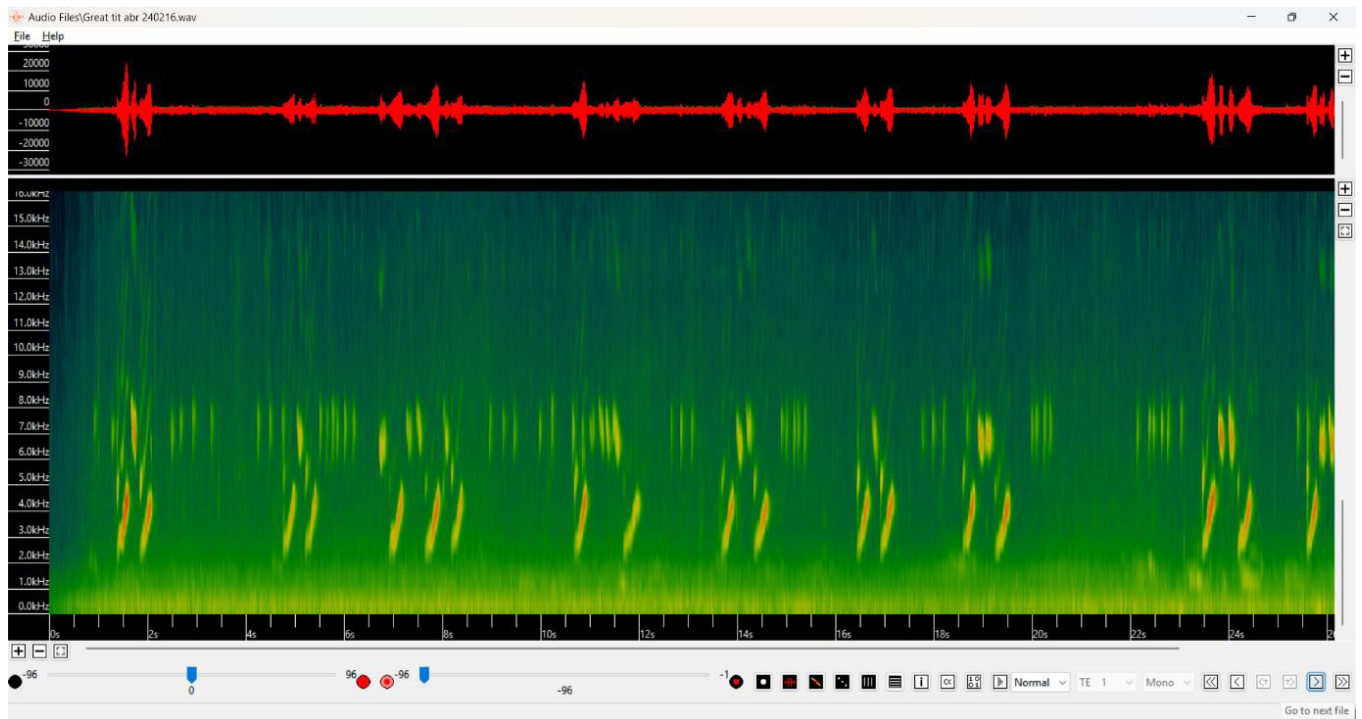


Figure one. Sonogram of great tit (*Parus major*) calls from a recording made in February 2024 and available at: <https://xeno-canto.org/875341>

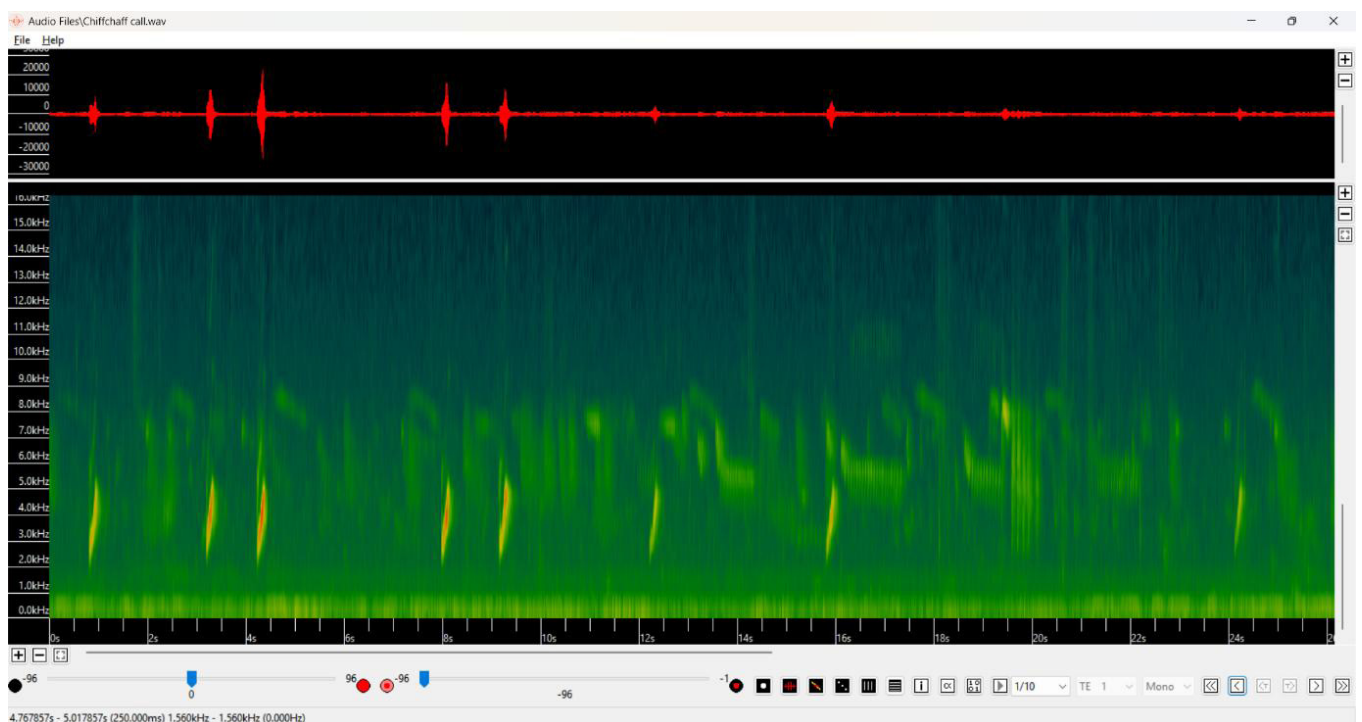


Figure two. Sonogram of chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*) calls made in August 2022 and available at: <https://xeno-canto.org/745782>

The most notable difference between figure one and two is that the great tit calls are more clearly grouped into pairs and, occasionally, threes, whereas, though there appears to be some pairing of the chiffchaff calls, they are more like a series of single calls with loose associations. This difference is demonstrated by the measurements shown in table one.

Feature	Great Tit (<i>Parus major</i>)	Chiffchaff (<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>)
Lowest Frequency/Mean (Hz)	2181	2359
Highest Frequency/Mean (Hz)	4895	5087
Length of Call/Mean (s)	0.3326	0.2552
Time between elements/Mean (s)	0.3015	0.8634
Time between Groups/Mean (s)	1.8875	2.9579

Table one. Comparison of the great tit (*Parus major*) and chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*) calls. These are the mean average values measured in Raven Lite 2. Frequencies measured in Hertz (Hz) and time in seconds (s).

Time between elements of each group was calculated where there was clear grouping. Time between groups included singles as groups (chiffchaff) and was only carried out where measurements were clear. See figure three.

In the case of this pair of recordings, the chiffchaff calls tend toward higher frequencies and shorter call length. As expected from the visual inspection of the sonograms, the time between the elements of a group and the time between groups are both longer in chiffchaff compared with the great tit call.

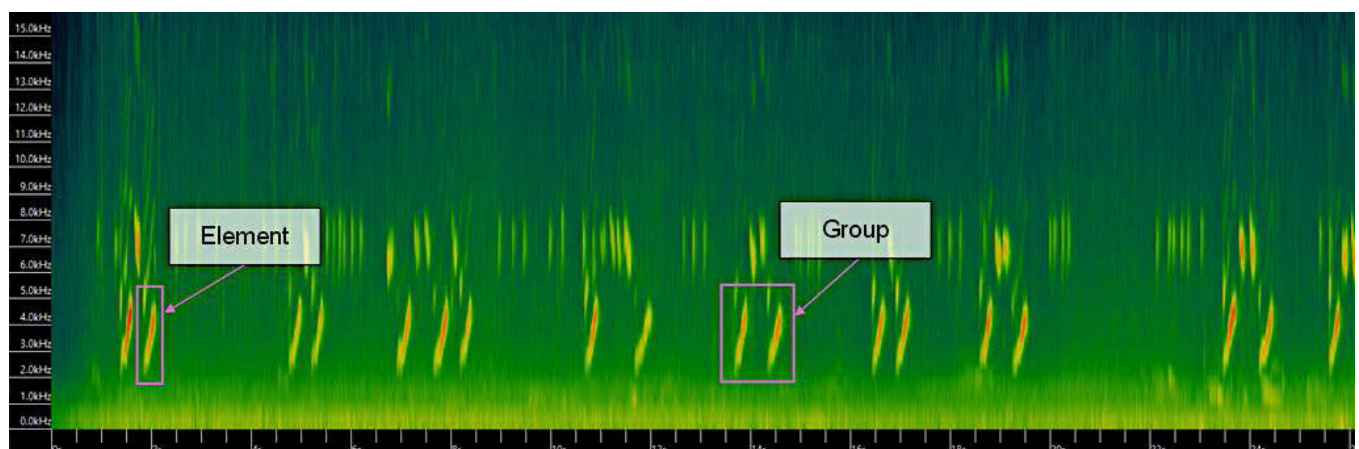


Figure three. Sonogram showing an element and a group.

After spending some time on Xeno-canto, it would appear that the chiffchaff-like calls of great tit are heard more frequently than I had thought, as seen in figure four and heard in the associated recording, where this call type is heard along with others. I compared this recording with another of chiffchaff calls.

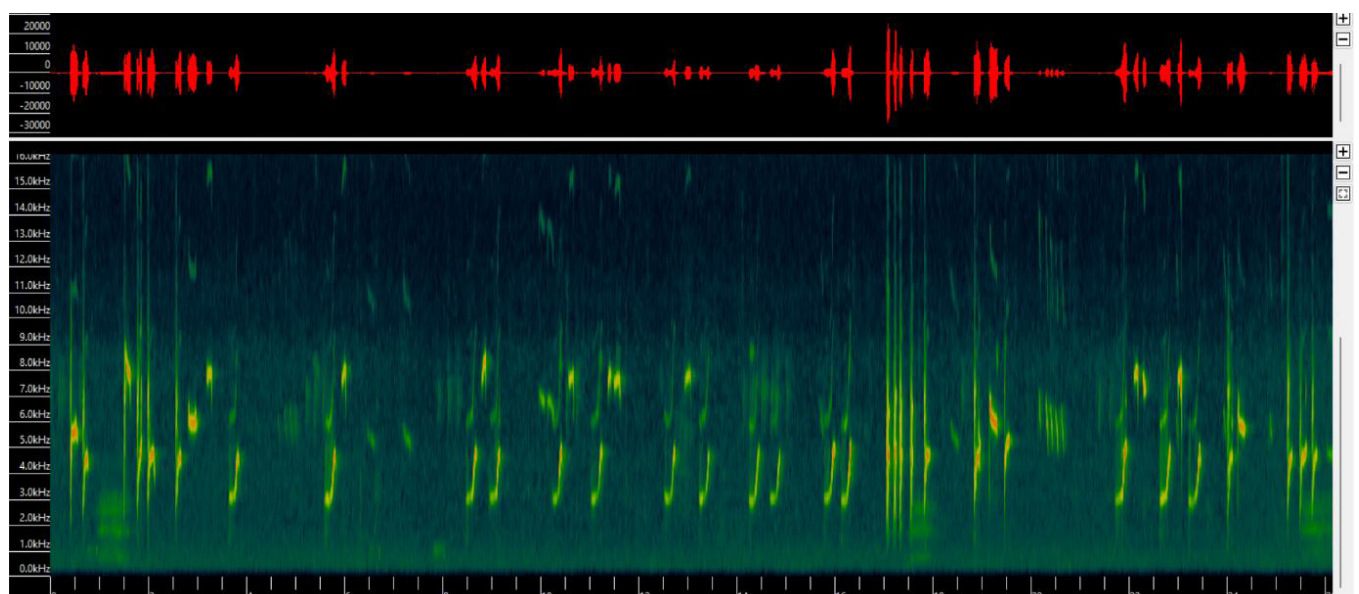


Figure four. Section of great tit recording showing chiffchaff-like calls (Dominic Garcia-Hall, available at www.xeno-canto.org/433458).

Measurements made of the two recordings suggests that frequency alone is not a reliable indicator for distinguishing the calls as these appear to show the opposite of the previous recordings. However, the time between elements, as expected, tends toward being shorter in great tit, which is consistent with the previous observation.

Feature	Great Tit (<i>Parus major</i>)	Chiffchaff (<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>)
Lowest Frequency/Mean (Hz)	2690	2242
Highest Frequency/Mean (Hz)	4927	4709
Length of Call/Mean (s)	0.2218	0.2036
Time between elements/Mean (s)	0.2821	0.7625
Time between Groups/Mean (s)	0.9868	-

Table two. Great tit (*Parus major*) and chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*) calls available at <https://xeno-canto.org/433458> and <https://xeno-canto.org/784696> respectively. This chiffchaff call did not exhibit any clear grouping of calls; only the time between calls is shown.

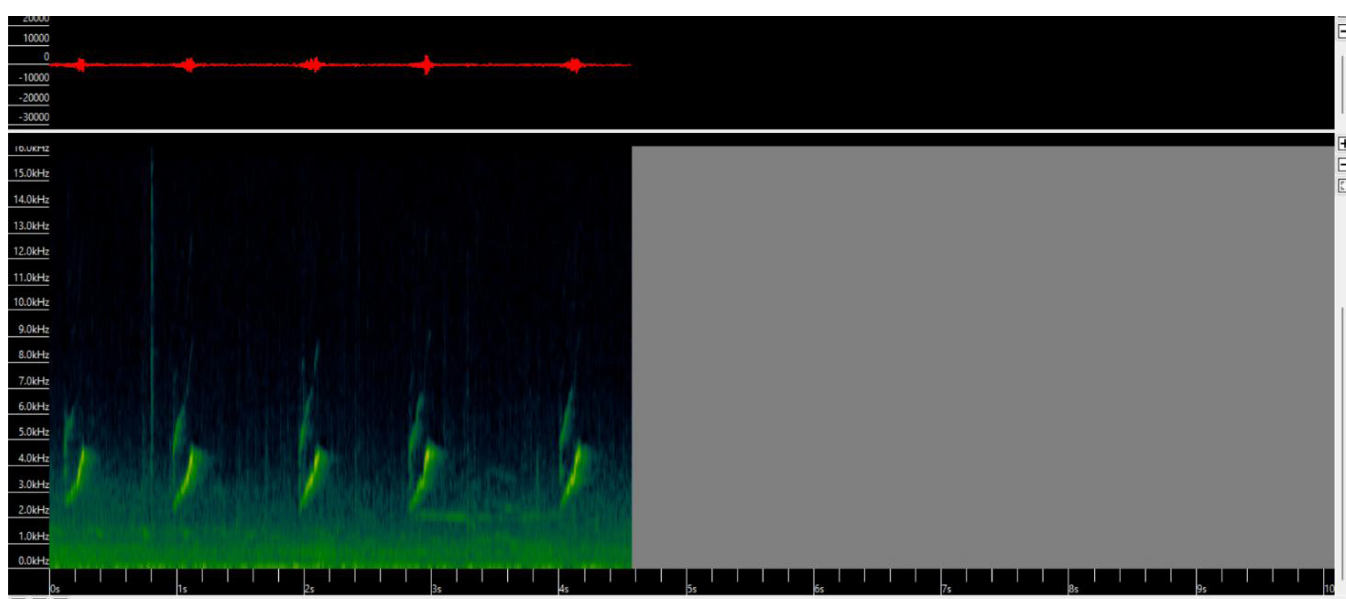


Figure five. Chiffchaff call (Ian Roberts, XC784696. Accessible at www.xeno-canto.org/784696).

When working with the measurements, I calculated the mean average in an effort to reduce the impact of particularly high or low figures that would not be representative of the calls as a whole and also to reduce the impact of any measuring errors that may have occurred. As grouping is much less clear with chiffchaff, the time between elements appears to be the more useful feature. For chiffchaff this appears to be in the range of 0.76 seconds to 0.86 seconds and for great tit 0.28 seconds to 0.30 seconds. This supports the sonograms and the recordings themselves and would appear to be a reliable method of distinguishing chiffchaff calls from similar calls made by great tit.

Limitations of this investigation include the limited range of recordings considered and that there are other species, such as chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) that produce similar calls and were not considered here. The main takeaway from this is that call and interval length can be important factors to consider when identifying calls to species. This may appear obvious and is something I had considered in the past,

but looking at these calls in a little more depth has reinforced that for me and the measurements have confirmed what can be heard in the calls and seen on the sonograms.

References and Recordings

Verboom, W.C. (2009). Bird vocalizations: the Great tit (*Parus major*), *JunoBioacoustics* memo 200910, December 2009, Winkel, The Netherlands.

David Bissett, XC875341. Accessible at www.xeno-canto.org/875341.

David Bissett, XC745782. Accessible at www.xeno-canto.org/745782.

Dominic Garcia-Hall, XC433458. Accessible at www.xeno-canto.org/433458.

Ian Roberts, XC784696. Accessible at www.xeno-canto.org/784696.

Pond Soundscapes

Aquatic Plants

by David de la Haye



Sonic Pond Dipping began as a one-off event at a nature reserve in County Durham in 2022ⁱ. It has since been delivered at around 50 events across the UK and Europe. The premise is simple: to offer an arts-based approach to learning about freshwater ecosystems. Rather than using a net to invasively sample the biotic contents of a pond, it introduces the basic concepts of acoustic ecology and asks the question: “What can we learn by listening to water?”. Hydrophones lead participants away from the notion that what is observed in white specimen trays tells the whole story. By making the inaudible audibleⁱⁱ we venture into more-than-human realms.

The hydrophone was originally developed as a military tool for eavesdropping across vast oceans, and

its use has remained predominantly within marine environments. Before the advent of sophisticated electronic systems, humans still sought methods for listening beneath the water surface. For example, by submerging one end of an oar and placing the other next to the jawbone, the Iñupiat would use sound to locate their catchⁱⁱⁱ beneath the Alaskan ice. And, in 1490, Leonardo da Vinci made the observation that “ships could be heard at great distances underwater”^{iv}. Despite the wide realm of freshwater systems—and the incredible biodiversity they support—freshwater soundscapes remain largely undocumented. This is especially true of lentic, or still, freshwaters. Considering the rich biotic features of pond soundscapes, which typically include amphibians, fish, invertebrates, and macrophytes (i.e. aquatic plants), this is somewhat of an anomaly.

A handful of journal articles explore the potential impact of anthropogenic sound on pond residents specifically^v. The most notorious and prolific sound-maker in ponds is probably the Lesser Water Boatman (*Corixa punctata*) but even its wide and varied repertoire is not well understood. However, it is the sound production of macrophytes that has really captured my attention.

You’d be forgiven for thinking this is pure fiction, a variation on the myth of the mandrake root’s scream, perhaps. Surely these sounds aren’t being produced by the plants themselves? Researchers in the emerging field of phytoacoustics have demonstrated that plants do indeed react and respond to sounds in their environment^{vi}. But can we hear these in a small garden pond? The answer is yes. What’s more, “it sounds like techno!”, as one participant exclaimed during a workshop. The very concept that we can listen to the sound of plants is, in itself, remarkable. But that it can sound so musical, that’s what really intrigues me.

It should be made clear that the plant sounds referred to here are 100% natural. There has been a surge in the popularity of so-called “plant music” devices, which use electrodes placed on various flora, or perhaps the cap of a mushroom. These nodes pick up chemical changes in the biotic system, which are then transcribed into MIDI data used to trigger samples. This is problematic, as the triggered sounds could be anything; a kick drum, an ethereal pad, a lightsaber sound effect. It removes the sonic agency of the natural world and replaces it with something of human choosing. This sonification of data does not, in my opinion, constitute the true sound of a plant. If anything, it falsifies and ventriloquises nature, replacing it with a human ideal of what nature *should* sound like. Products like these ‘cheaper’ and commodify the experience of listening to the natural world.

The sounds heard on Sonic Pond Dipping excursions are actually produced by plants. The experience could be likened to peering down a microscope: we tune into micro-sonic pops, clicks, rasps, bubbles, and fizzes, which are picked up by a hydrophone and amplified so

that we may hear them more clearly. But the biggest mystery remains—how are these sounds being made? The general consensus is that the sounds are produced through the process of photosynthesis, although no academic paper has yet confirmed this. Wanting to learn more, I submitted a proposal to the 17th International Aquatic Plants Group (IAPG) conference and, to my surprise, it was accepted. So, in September 2025, I headed to Portugal to present an arts-science piece titled ‘The Voice of Aquatic Plants’. During the presentation I shared an array of macrophyte recordings (scan the QR code to hear some) whilst asking how we might rediscover nature connection through the act of underwater listening.



*Scan to Hear a Selection of
Aquatic Plant Sounds*

Despite attending numerous science conferences over the last few years, I couldn’t help but feel like an invasive species at this one too! Rather than arriving with a slideshow full of data and an encyclopaedic

taxonomic knowledge of freshwater plants, I brought a bag of cables, a pair of headphones, and an abundance of curiosity. Conversations were awkward at first; what’s a musician doing at an aquatic plants symposium? But it wasn’t long until we were led back to the same source - we are each trying to find our place in the natural world.

Joining the midweek excursion to a restored wetland reserve, I offered the chance for a group to listen underwater for themselves. It was intended as a low-key workshop, but as announcements kept coming over the coach’s tannoy system, expectations grew. On this trip there were some of the world’s most eminent experts on photosynthesis. What were they going to make of it all? After a gentle walk in the baking midday sun, we made our way to a gazebo that had been set up especially for the “main event.” Already sweating in the arid heat, the pressure was now on. What if there were no sounds? What if, after all the enthusiastic build-up the excitement of arts and science working together we were greeted by silence?

I gingerly placed the hydrophones in the water and took a listen.

I need not have worried. The freshwater soundscape was in full voice. I passed the headphones around. “What is making this sound? Are they frogs?!” said one ecologist. “Insects?” offered another. Despite being in knowledgeable company, there was a palpable sense of intrigue. With no succinct or sure explanation to identify these sounds, I suggested that the source may be photosynthesis. Mouths opened, people leaned forward, eyes widened, eyebrows raised,



Above: Listening and Reaction to Underwater Sounds at the Aquatic Plants Group Conference

potential non-verbal indicators of awe and wonder^{vii}, all found in a pond! The general consensus was that the photosynthesis hypothesis made sense and through ongoing conversations I gleaned some very recent information including a scientific paper on the acoustic patterns of aquatic macrophytes^{viii}. This information will feed into future workshops.

There is a beauty in the direct connection that listening offers. “It was like finding a new connection with our beloved plants and freshwater environments” commented one of the attendees. Clearly, some participants were deeply affected by what they heard. One woman clasped her chest and described a “resonance with her core,” expressing the sense of being in a womb. Sound is thought to be the first sense that humans develop, it speaks to our primordial selves.

During 2025, EcoSound CIC delivered Sonic Pond Dipping at 19 events, working with local councils, non-governmental organisations, schools, and scientific groups—sharing the practice of ecological listening with approximately 300 people. As someone at the IAPG commented: “We learned about the restoration work in the area and even got a glimpse of the underwater world through eco-acoustics.”

In 2026, the aim is to continue sharing the importance of environmental listening and develop further novel methods of responding to freshwater issues. Our ponds, lakes, and rivers have a lot to say. We just need to listen.

If you're interested in hosting a Sonic Pond Dipping session, or can think of any communities that might benefit from these workshops, please do get in touch by visiting the website:

www.sonic-pond.net

Workshops delivered by www.ecosound.org.uk

References.

- i. Read the article in WSRS Journal, Spring 2022
- ii. Harris, Y. (2012) ‘Understanding Underwater: the Art and Science of Interpreting Whale Sounds.’
- iii. Bakker, K. (2022). The Sounds of Life: How Digital Technology Is Bringing Us Closer to the Worlds of Animals and Plants, p. 33
- iv. From <https://dosits.org/>
- v. See: Desjonquères, C., Greenhalgh, J., Parris, K.
- vi. Gagliano, M. (2018) Thus Spoke The Plant
- vii. Keltner, D. (2023) Awe: The New Science Of Everyday Wonder And How It Can Transform Your Life
- viii. Van Der Lee, G. *et al.* (2025) Underwater plant sounds: Diel acoustic patterns of four submerged aquatic macrophytes



Above: Delegates Sonic Pond Dipping at the 17th International Aquatic Plants Group Conference



Building A Sound Isolation Chamber for Recording Quiet Sounds such as Insects

by Dick Todd

I've always wondered if it would be possible to record the quiet sounds of pill bugs walking and similar quiet sounds. Doing a little investigation, I learned about the use of an (anechoic chamber). It is an enclosed space designed to stop reflections or echoes of either sound or electromagnetic waves. Anechoic chambers range from the size of a small household microwave to one as large as aircraft hangers.

First sketching up a basic framework for attaching a thin wood skin creating a cube. The outside surface is sprayed with a waterproof rubberized sealing paint which fills edge seams. Inside the cube all air gaps are sealed with acoustic caulk. Next egg crate foam panels are cut to fit inside the 2x2' inch framework. Then two holes are drilled on the lower side for a pair of XLR female jacks to allow connections of internal microphone capsules.

The cube is approximately 16 inches by 19 inches. The door cover opening is large enough for placing insect cage, led light , platform for subjects and plants. The door cover fits inside the basic framework acting as a

plug to seal out noise.

A series of O Rings pull the door snugly in place.

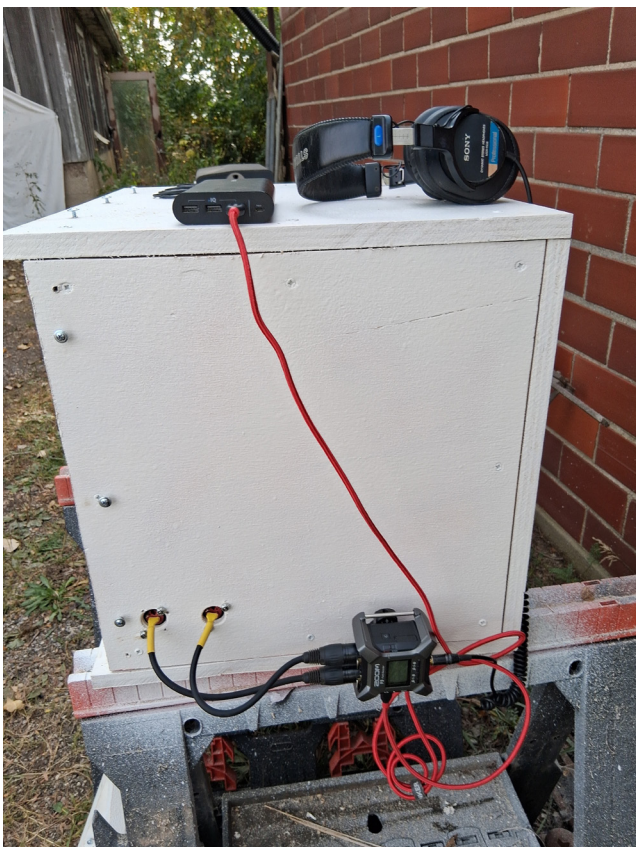
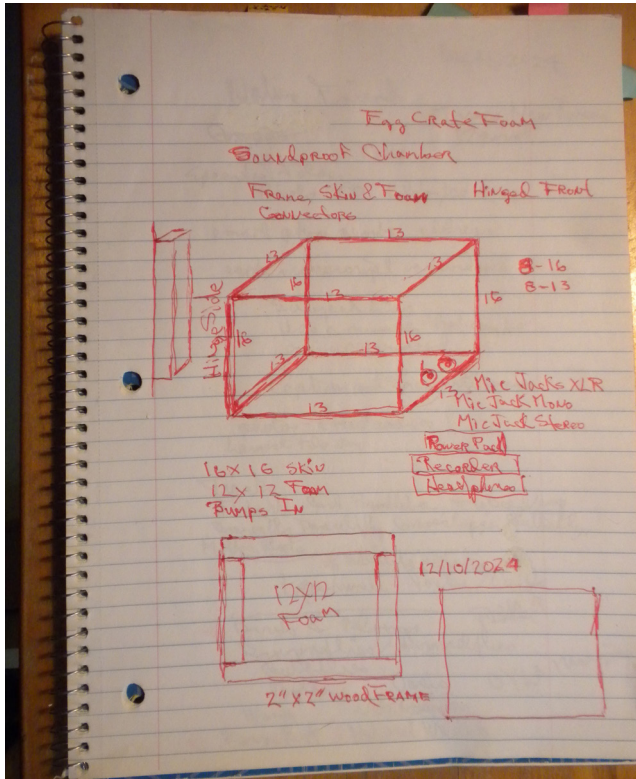
When using the cube, it is placed on four tennis balls to dampen outside vibrations. The jack connections hook up the power pack, recorder and headphones. My approach was based on space and portability without having to invest in hard to obtain materials for the initial design. If denser material is required, it can be added later.

List of materials: 2x2 inch wood frame, 16-inch square x 1/8-inch wood panels, 3/4 Inch Plywood, egg crate foam, foam filler strips, white waterproof rubberized sealing paint, Acoustic Caulk 29 Oz. Tube, Two XLR female jacks with pass through cables, 1-inch screws for panels , 1.50 screws for framework and four tennis balls as vibration isolation feet on the bottom surface. A fine mesh platform will be placed over soil samples to aid in picking up sounds it will also support fresh flowers to attract feeding bumble bees and wasp. A cricket cage will be used for singing insects and a heated floor mat will allow the temperature inside to

be adjusted.

This is a work in progress, I added an adjustable LED light today, looking to install some type of back-up camera inside the cube to observe.

Below: Photos of the Isolation Chamber Construction





WSRS Competition 2025

The main entry Classes are:

1. Individual
2. Species
3. Combination
4. Habitat
5. Creative

Also don't forget the **Documentary Competition** where you get the chance to tell a short story about wildlife sound that may be interesting to others.

So Please start to think about what recordings you might like to enter.

All the details and entry forms will be made available on the members area of the website and via WSRS Newsletters

Submission of Entries Closes 31st December 2025

Good Luck!

WSRS Loan Equipment

Due to the immense generosity of WSRS members we can offer a number of items for loan.

Some of the equipment is already being used but if you would like borrow any of the equipment please contact Ian Brady (membership@wildlife-sound.org) .

The equipment **must** be covered for post and packaging and insured, at replacement cost, for the period of the loan.

The available equipment consists of the following:

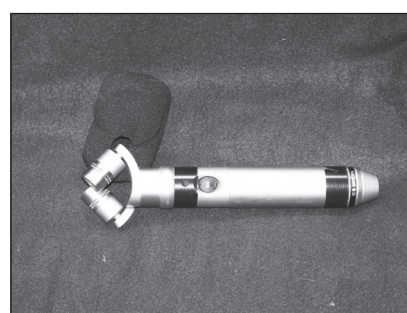
Pearl MS8 M-S Microphone
requires Phantom power



Audio Technica AT3031 Cardioid microphone – phantom powered



Røde NT4 Stereo X-Y Microphone
use with Phantom or internal 9V 'PP' battery power



LOAN EQUIPMENT

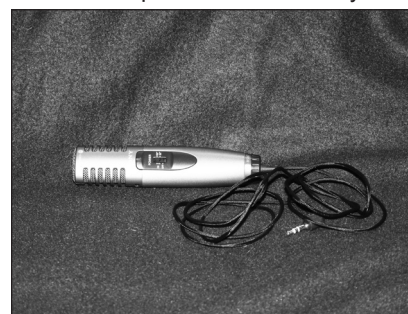
Sony ECM999 Adjustable stereo M-S Microphone Phantom or internal 'AA' battery power



Sony EMC959V M-S Microphone requires 1.5V AA Battery



Sony ECM907 Small stereo M-S Microphone that requires an 'AA' Battery



Telinga Parabolic Reflector with Stereo Microphone and wind cover. 9V 'PP' battery powered



Sennheiser MKH816T 'Shotgun' microphone. Requires T (A+B) Powering. XLR Connector included.



Sennheiser ME series - ME66 short gun, 2xME64 Cardioid, 2xME62 Omni + 2xK6. AA battery or phantom power



Sennheiser MKH60 Short Gun microphone phantom powered



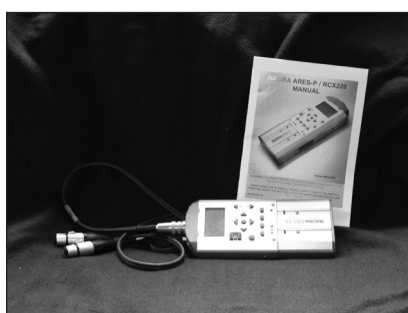
Sennheiser MKH30 Figure 8 microphone – phantom powered



AKG CK9 'Shotgun' microphone. Phantom powered. Rycote 'Blimp' windshield included.



Nagra ARES-P Digital recorder with 2GB Compact Flash card



Olympus LS100 with 4Gb SD card, spare battery.



Sound Devices SD702 digital recorder (Compact Flash storage)



WSRS Events

The WSRS Officers are currently looking to arrange the next field meetings. Please look out for Newsletters and Website for the latest information and booking details.

As always event and field trip updates will be made available via Newsletters

Listening Sessions.

Please support our Online Listening Sessions and meetings held throughout the year.

Further Information on Events, Competition Entry and anything else, please use our website or you can

Contact our Secretary Alan Burbidge

30 Wilsthorpe Road, Breaston, Derby. DE72 3EB. Tel. 07739177502 email: secretary@wildlife-sound.org

Instructions for Authors

Copy dates are **31st January** (Spring edition) and **30th August** (Autumn edition) but please send articles in as soon as possible so work can begin on the journal well ahead of the copy deadline.

Text: submission of manuscripts in electronic form, via e-mail, is preferred.

All common document formats can be handled, but ideally Microsoft Word DOC or RTF. Apple Pages files will need to be converted to .DOC / .RTF. Articles should be submitted with the following settings:

Font – Arial

Size – font size 10

Line spacing - 1.5

Justified

Sentences should have a single space only after full stops please, before beginning the next sentence

Please do not indent new paragraphs, just return space between paragraphs please

Please don't add any additional formatting e.g. bold, italics, underline, line indents etc. unless necessary e.g. Latin names), as this may have to be removed before the text is edited.

Typed manuscripts are also acceptable, but as above, please avoid additional formatting or underlining as this can make them difficult to scan. Hand-written manuscripts will be accepted only for contributions of less than 150 words.

Illustrations: Digital images (via e-mail, file transfer web sites or on CD) are preferred. Digital images should be in PNG, TIFF format or JPG with a print resolution of at least 300 dpi. Please do not embed digital images in your text document - they must be sent separately.

Prints or transparencies are acceptable but will require extra work to handle.

Please do not post valuable or irreplaceable hard copy images. WSRS cannot be responsible for their safe return.

Also - Please can we kindly ask that you 'cheque' and 'pruf' read your documents prior to sending to us. This will help reduce, what can be a significant amount of editing after our proof reading.

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Spring 2026**

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- The Sky’s The Limit”*

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