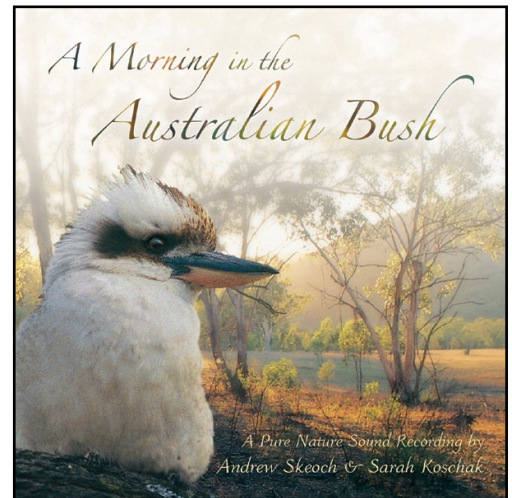


"A Morning in the Australian Bush"

Listening Notes

This album on www.listeningearth.com:
<http://www.listeningearth.com/LE/product.php?id=5>



Introduction

This recording brings you the birdsong of what many would call typical Australian bush - open, dry sclerophyl woodland.

We recorded in an areas where the country was largely undisturbed, and the health of the ecosystem is evidenced by the number and diversity of species present. Birdlife dominates the recording; the morning is, after all, the birds' most active time. We begin at first light and move through to mid-morning.

First Light

It is pre-dawn and the air is crisp and cool. The sky is just beginning to pale, with the morning star shining brightly above the silhouetted tree tops.

Track 1: **Laughing Kookaburras**

Mole crickets call from the ground as the bush first begins to awaken. A Wood Duck is heard far off (0:25), before the first chorus of Kookaburras (0:30-0:53) breaks the stillness.



A pair of Australian Magpies, roosting in a tall eucalypt, join in (0:56) with their melodious voices. Other families of Kookaburras assert their respective territories (1:22 & 1:40-2:04).

Track 2: **Magpies**

Magpies are also very territorial. This pair flies from their roost tree with distinctively whistling wings (0:42), to call from a neighbouring vantage point.



Track 3: **Bush Curlews**

The eerie cries of Bush Curlews fill the still air (0:05-0:50). These curious birds are nocturnal and predominantly ground dwelling.

A White-throated Nightjar, another nocturnal bird, gives a final call (0:51) before settling into its daytime roost, an unobtrusive place on the forest floor. A pair of Curlews, silhouetted against the paling sky, fly immediately overhead (0:59 & 1:11) to land close by (1:15) and begin calling again (1:23... & 2:03...).

Magpies chase each other from tree to tree (2:20-2:35).

Dawn chorus

By now the sky is awash with subtle colour. The bush is waking up, with numerous small birds taking up the dawn chorus. It is interesting to note that it is primarily the males asserting territory that are the most vocally active.

Track 4: **Superb Fairy-wrens**

The liquid cascading reel of Superb (Blue) Fairy-wrens (0:03, 0:14, 0:27...) can be heard against a backdrop of predominantly White-plumed Honeyeaters. Magpies continue to sing, but the Kookaburras are chuckling with less gusto than earlier, while a Grey Butcherbird may be discerned in the distance (0:45, 1:11, 1:19, 1:33, & 1:59).

Also present are a Peaceful Dove giving its soft repeated “Oo-le-goo” (2:13, 2:22, 2:31...), and a Magpie-lark, or ‘Peewee’ (3:12).



Track 5: **Willie Wagtail**

One of Australia’s most widely distributed birds, and most well known, the Willie Wagtail is recognised by its cheery song (0:01, 0:07...).

There are many regional dialects of this bubbly cadence, often described as “Sweet pretty creature!”. These birds seem to be saying “Well you’d better get better then!”. A flock of Australian Ravens may be heard “cawing” as they slowly fly high overhead (..1:30..), and the Magpie-lark is heard again (1:19). Also audible are a Cicada as it flies (0:11), the piping calls of Red-rumped Parrots (0:36, 0:40, 1:03), a Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike (0:51, 0:58, 1:07) and Mole Crickets softly throughout.

Track 6: **Noisy Friarbird**

A Noisy Friarbird, clambering amongst the gum blossoms above, ‘talks’ in an animated cackling chatter (0:03-0:21, 0:32), before flying off (0:55). These querulous large honeyeaters are named for their leathery featherless heads, rather than a monastic temperament. In the distance, a related honeyeater, the Red Wattlebird, gives a few harsh calls (0:14, 0:33, 0:46).

There is now a lot of activity in the bush. The Magpies are getting really warmed up, calling to each other almost continuously in liquid bubbling chortles, overflowing into melodious song.

A Galah, which has been preening in the sun, takes flight (1:20) with a flash of pink, while from the same branch, a small group of Dusky Woodswallows chatter contentedly (0:46...2:29...) between short aerial forays after insects.



The Grey Shrike-thrush, which can be a spectacular songster at times, here gives its penetrating contact call (1:32, 1:37, 1:46, 1:57...). White-plumed Honeyeaters can also be heard (1:07, 2:40, 2:44), while the flock of Ravens overhead and the Wagtails continue a pervasive presence.

Track 7: **Grey-crowned Babblers**

Grey-crowned Babblers are gregariously social birds. They feed on or near the ground, moving in a loose group and occasionally, especially when disturbed, bursting into a collective chorus of their wonderful “Yahoo”ing calls (0:01~0:11, 0:36, 0:50~1:06, 1:16...). The source of the disturbance on this occasion is a Brown Goshawk, gliding silently above the tree tops and alighting in a nearby tree. The Babblers intensify their calls (2:00..), joining with the more distant “Peep-peep-peep..” alarm calls of Noisy Miners (0:20.., 1:18, 2:28..).

The Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike has returned to a closer perch (..0:24, 0:32, 0:37..), and Grey Shrike-thrushes respond to each other (2:31 & 2:57).

Sunrise

The first rays of the sun are now streaming through the treetops, and the dawn chorus is subsiding



Track 8: **Pied Butcherbirds**

The sublime song of the Pied Butcherbird (0:06, 0:30, 0:47...) carries across an open area in the forest. From nearby exposed perches, a male and female sing in antiphonal duet, creating what seems to be a single pure fluted melody. It may seem that there is only one bird singing,, but if you listen closely you can hear them both, and perhaps picture them with their heads thrown back, bobbing and stretching as they call (try 1:32 or 3:40; notice the second note, lower and more mellow than the others, which is contributed by the partner, probably the female. By comparison; at 1:22, the male sings his melody alone). Another pair of Butcherbirds may be heard in the distance (1:46, 1:56 & 2:15).

Also to be heard are a Kangaroo ‘grunting’ (0:49), a White-faced Heron calling as it flies lazily overhead (3:59), and a flock of Little Lorikeets (1:38, 1:53) as they shoot out from the crown of a eucalypt where they have been feasting on gum blossoms.

In the distance are a variety of other birds, including Jacky Winters (..1:16..1:47..), a Restless Flycatcher “Chewie, chewie, chewie..” (..2:32, 2:38..), a Striped Honeyeater (bubbly “Wirrawee..”) (2:40, 3:09), Fuscous Honeyeaters “T,t,t,t,t” (3:26.., 4:19), and Willie Wagtails.

A Turquoise Parrot may be heard occasionally (3:42, 3:50, 3:57, 4:08, 4:11, 4:14) before...

Track 9: **Turquoise Parrots**

...taking wing (0:18 & 0:46). Turquoise Parrots are small, grass-feeding birds, their bright plumage suprisingly difficult to see against the ground. Like many small parrot species, they are nomadic, however this has not helped them withstand the pressures of land clearance. With the disappearance of native grasses and woodland, Turquoise Parrots have lost both food and shelter, as they require hollows in a dead tree or log for nesting. Hence, although these birds were once widespread and numerous, they are now likely to be found only where suitable areas of habitat remain. The good news is that their numbers seem to be increasing.

A Jacky Winter calls close by (0:34, 1:04, 1:16).

Track 10: **Restless Flycatcher**

There is something wonderfully endearing about the raspy territorial calls of Restless Flycatchers. A pair of these feisty little birds are agitated by the re-appearance of the Brown Goshawk that was hanging about earlier. Together they buoyantly hover and flutter amongst the upper foliage, taking little diversions to dive-bomb the Goshawk. Noisy Miners, ever alert, also join in the commotion (1:05, 2:02, 2:39, 3:30).

Cameo appearances here from a Noisy Friarbird (1:10, 2:19..), Little Lorikeets (1:45, 1:54) and a bush fly (0:49).



Track 11: **Pied Currawongs & White-winged Choughs**

A group of Pied Currawongs swoop in, sounding the well-known call that gives them their name (0:02..).

In the process they disturb a family of White-winged Choughs, which fly up from the forest floor (0:34..), where they have been feeding.

Choughs are intensely social birds, always found in extended family groups, looking after each other and their young, playing, squabbling and conversing.

Their raspy alarm calls (1:03) contrast with beautiful cascading whistles (which are actually group alarm calls; 1:08..) and animated chatter (2:06..).

Choughs are the goofy clowns of the bird world. Have you ever seen a bird fly up to branch, land and fall off? Choughs seem to manage it. At one point here, a few Choughs land on a branch which breaks under their collective weight (0:52), precipitating them back into the air with much raucous indignation (0:48).



As the Choughs return to their feeding and gradually move off, a variety of typical woodland birds may be heard, including; a Yellow-faced Honeyeater, “Chick-up, chick-up, chick-up” (1:26), a Pallid Cuckoo, known as the Brainfever-bird because of its repetitive call (2:08, 3:14, 3:22..), an Eastern Yellow Robin “Chaff, chaff” (2:15 ...), an Eastern Spinebill (2:53), a Grey Fantail (3:10, 3:38, 3:49), and Jacky Winters (3:02, 3:17, 3:36). A Painted Honeyeater, an uncommon and nomadic species that feeds on the fruit of Mistletoe, may also be heard (4:22).

Track 12: **Striped Honeyeaters**

Striped Honeyeaters have wonderful ebulliently bubbling calls that, for us, are very evocative of our dry woodland country (0:05, 1:16). In a shaded watercourse nearby, a solitary Pobblebonk Frog can be heard calling from moist vegetation overhanging a small rockpool (...0:02, 0:19, 0:31...), and the Painted Honeyeaters continue their beautifully pure piping (0:36, 0:57, 1:09, 1:27...).

Track 13: **Rainbow Bee-eaters**

A small flock of Rainbow Bee-eaters has been circling in the air above the tree tops for the last few minutes. Their distinctive calls, an almost bell-like chirruping “Trrrp, trrrp” (...0:11, 0:21, 0:24, 0:31, 0:35,...), are a signal to look up and see their beautiful orange underwings circling against the blue sky.

A pair have now settled on a high branch overhead, while others continue to circle around, hawking for airborne insects.

Meanwhile the Striped (0:36, 1:07) and Painted (2:08, 2:11) Honeyeaters are still around, along with a Willie Wagtail, the Yellow Robin, feeding Ringneck Parrots (0:53), a Red Wattlebird (1:24), Dusky Woodswallows (1:54, 2:37) and a Jacky Winter (..1:42..).



Track 14: **White-throated Gerygone**

This silvery cascade of notes (0:02) comes from a White-throated Gerygone (pronounced jer-rig-ony). A pair of birds are dividing their time between feeding and gathering nesting material, intermittently giving their endearing call (0:25, 0:44, 0:48, 1:13), which is mostly heard in spring. Meanwhile, the resting Rainbow Bee-eaters take to the air to join the circling flock (0:54...), and a pair of Little Lorikeets hurtle overhead (2:08).

Track 15: **White-browed Babblers**

White-browed Babblers are also social and playful birds, foraging together in extended family groups and scolding each other with their wheezy calls (0:03, 0:27, 0:36, 0:43).

They are related to the Grey-crowned Babblers we encountered earlier, and although White-browed's are usually found in dryer inland areas, it is not uncommon for them to inhabit the same general area.





A pair of Painted Button Quail call antiphonally (0:25, 1:50), their haunting low “Oom, oom, oom.” seeming to come from nowhere in particular, making them difficult to locate by call alone. Their call is very similar to that of the Common Bronzewing Pigeon; the pigeon calls at 2-3 second intervals at a steady pitch, whereas the Quail call every second, and you will notice a slight rising in pitch.

Red Wattlebirds must surely have one of the most unmusical calls (0:24, 0:32, 0:44..), in contrast to the pleasant “Ziiit, ziiit, ziiit” of

Dusky Woodswallows (...0:50...). Meanwhile the Restless Flycatchers have returned with their insistent “Cheweee, cheweee.” (1:13...).

Morning

It is well into the morning, and the day is warming up.

Track 16: **Mixed flock of Thornbills & Weebills**

The branches of trees and bushes become alive with small birds as a mixed flock moves through, fluttering noisily from bush to bush. It seems that feeding together in mixed flocks is beneficial, as each species disturbs insects for the others. This group is composed mostly of Buff-rumped and Brown Thornbills, with Weebills and Spotted Pardalotes.

The Buff-rumped Thornbills are creating the thin, animated twittering (particularly around 2:40..), the Brown Thornbill’s call usually ends with a little down-slurred trill (inconspicuously at 0:55, or closer at 1:45, 1:49, 1:52), the Weebills call their name, “Weebill” (0:16, 0:26, 0:39, & 2:30..), and the Spotted Pardalotes have a distinctive 2 or 3-note piping call (0:34, 0:37, 0:41, 0:44, and softly around 3:30..).

Also present are a White-throated Treecreeper (0:11, 0:18, 0:25...), a Ringneck Parrot (2:13, 3:03, 3:12) and an Australian Raven (3:08).

Track 17: **Jacky Winter**

You should be thoroughly familiar with the Jacky Winter by now. He’s been energetically calling his name, “Jacky, jacky, jacky” (0:05, 0:14, 0:24).. “Winter, winter, winter” (0:33, 0:46), for quite a while now.

A Grey Fantail chases insects through the air (..1:04..), a Ringneck Parrot calls (1:18, and chatters 1:33), followed by the screeches of a pair of Galahs (..1:37..). In the far distance, the descending whistles of a Horsfield’s Bronze Cuckoo may just be heard (2:41, 2:59).



Track 18: **Sacred Kingfisher**

Sacred Kingfishers are probably the best known of our small woodland Kingfishers. Nesting in tree hollows, they defend their territories tenaciously. Here a parent may be heard returning to the nest and uttering a variety of calls, including a characteristic loud “Ek, ek, ek, ek..” (0:03, 0:17..), interspersed with percussive “Chk,tt!”s (0:05, 0:11, 1:14), and occasionally a soft excited churring (1:39..1:50).

The Horsefield’s Bronze Cuckoo may be heard a little clearer now (..1:00..), along with a distant group of Pied Currawongs (..1:20..).

A small group of Weebills are still around (1:23, 1:28, 1:53) and the Cicadas are beginning to make themselves evident.



Track 19: **Olive-backed Oriole**

The Olive-backed Oriole is another bird that calls its own name, a rolling bubbly “Orri-orri-ol” (0:03, 0:11..). Here a single bird calls in contact to its mate, interspersing its calls with a quiet chattery subsong, with occasional mimicry of Ringneck Parrots (0:14), and later a Magpie (1:32).

In the background are the Weebills (0:29), a White-throated Tree-creeper (0:41, 1:18), a White-throated Gerygone (0:52), and finally a Striped Honeyeater (1:37).

Track 20: **Rufous Whistler**

Rufous Whistlers, particularly the males, are wonderfully expressive vocalists in the summer breeding season. During the middle of the day, they are one of the few birds that will continue to fill the bush with song (0:01, 0:06, 0:17, 0:25, ..0:48,..). It is easy to understand why these birds are not only called Whistlers, but sometimes ‘Echong’ or ‘Mock Whipbird’.

A Striated Pardalote can be heard giving a quiet, repetitive “ch-chPink, ch-chPink” (..0:44..1:55..) as it searches for insects in the tree canopy nearby. Two Pied Currawongs, one in the far distance, echo each other’s ebullient whistles (1:12, 1:27, 1:38..). and a small flock of Varied Sitellas fly overhead (3:07..) with a chorus of social twittering.

Also to be heard are a White-throated Treecreeper (0:55), Galahs (1:30, 3:09), a distant Raven (2:08), a Red Wattlebird’s “Chock!” (2:03, 2:48), a Bush Fly (..2:58..), Cicadas throughout and finally, the soft piping of an Eastern Yellow Robin (3:44..).

