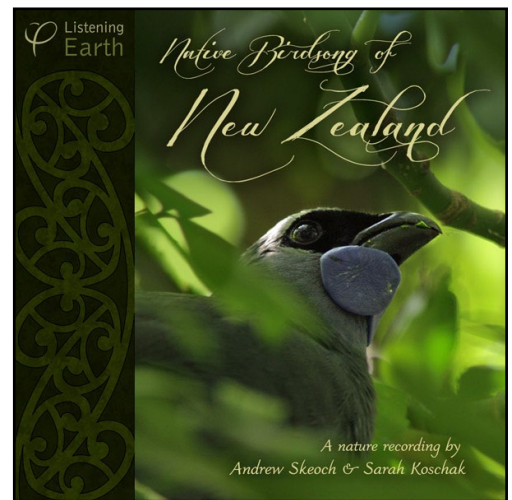


“Native Birdsong of New Zealand”

Listening Notes

This album on www.listeningearth.com:
<http://www.listeningearth.com/LE/product.php?id=116>



Track 1: Tuis begin the Dawn Chorus



Tuis have the most extraordinary songs; a great variety of sounds ranging right across the frequency spectrum. So they need a bit of acoustic space, and are usually the first birds singing in the dawn. Their songs often precede those of other species in the dawn chorus by up to an hour.

Also heard are the final calls of the night from a Morepork (0.09 to around 1.51)

Track 2: Bellbird Chorus

Bellbirds are the other dominant honeyeater in New Zealand, and are also vocally active at dawn. Tuis and Bellbirds were without much doubt the birds that Joseph Banks, botanist on Cook's Endeavour, heard as their ship was moored offshore, and of which he wrote in his diary of January 17, 1770:

“This morn I was awakd by the singing of the birds ashore, from whence we are distant not a quarter of a mile. The numbers of them were certainly very great, who seemd to strain their throats with emulation perhaps; their voices were certainly the most melodious wild musick I have ever heard, almost imitating small bells, but with the most tuneable silver sound imaginable, to which maybe the distance was no small addition.”

It seems to me that Tuis and Bellbirds have evolved a unique way of vocalising together; they take turns in the dawn chorus. The Tuis begin, holding the space for quite some time, before quietening down, whence the Bellbirds take over and make it their own. Thus you get this segregated dawn chorus, with each species dominating successive phases. It makes sense that these two vocally strong honeyeaters would have evolved this way of co-habiting in the acoustic space of a dawn chorus.



Track 3: **Whiteheads and Fantail**

Whiteheads are gregarious and highly vocal, and here join the dawn chorus with insistent chattering (4.00..., and closer 0.37).

The high-pitched song of a Fantail is also heard (10.00), and later a European Blackbird (3.23)



Track 4: **Hihi (Stitchbirds)**



Named after their call, an explosive “stitch!”, Stitchbirds have been calling for the last minute or so. They are also honeyeaters, but less dominant than the Tuis and Bellbirds, and take their place in the dawn chorus only once the Bellbirds subside.

A first Saddleback (0.23), and Kokako are heard (0.36, 4.38), while Tuis engage in frequent aerial chases (2.10).

We'll hear Saddlebacks clearer later on, but here I want to point out a call from them I really like; it is a plaintive, repeated phrase (0.41-0.50, and again throughout the track), before reverting to the staccato call (0.50...)

Track 5: **Tauhou (Silvereye)**

Flocks of tiny Silvereyes are widespread across New Zealand. Their Maori name, Tauhou, means visitor, and they are likely relatively recent migrants from Australia. Their song is a pleasant cadence of twitters (0.04, 0.15...)

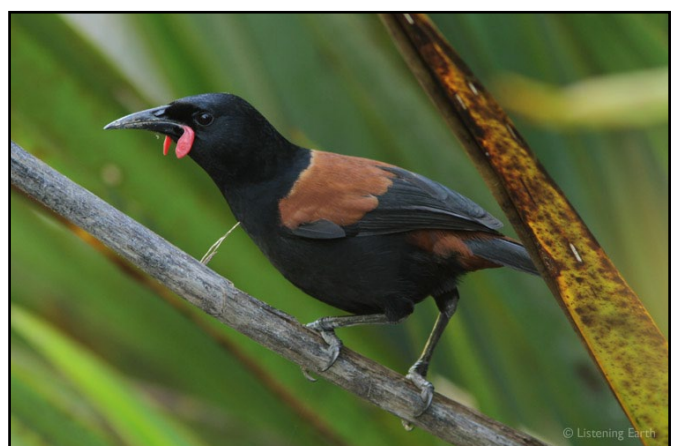
There are a few very high-pitched “seep”s here from a Rifleman (1.12). Several Saddlebacks call insistently throughout this track, but now their more commonly-heard staccato call.

Whiteheads continue to chatter, and you can also hear the male's territorial song, a descending cadence of notes (3.22, 3.45)

Track 6: **Grey Warbler and Saddlebacks**

Grey Warblers are the only member of the Gerygone (latin: “born of song”) family in New Zealand. They are found across both islands, and their sweet, “leaf-falling” song is regionally different wherever you go (0.00, 0.34, 1.06...).

Now we get to hear a Saddleback close up (0.37, 3.36, 4.10, 8.02) - yes - they really are loud!



Another Australian immigrant is the Sacred Kingfisher, giving its characteristic “kek, kek, kek, kek” territorial call (1.57). Also Australian, but an introduced species, is the Eastern Rosella; here a few calls in the distance (4.09-4.18)

A few soft flight calls from a Silvereye (2.16). Stitchbirds have a variety of sharp, high-pitched calls, and here is a typical one, an quick, triple-syllable whistle (2.31, 2.40, 2.49, 2.58..., 5.54...)

Whiteheads (6.42, 6.52...) and Tuis (6.35, 7.07...) continue to call throughout, as the dawn chorus gives way to the day. A Stitchbird, Saddleback and Tui are heard close by (8.44-9.30), and later a Fantail (11.43)

Track 7: **Kokakos**



Now we get to hear one of the most famed sounds of the New Zealand bush - the Kokako. Not only is this species very rare now (considered extinct on the south island), and the focus of intense conservation efforts, but it has the most hauntingly beautiful song, often referred to as being “organ-like”.

A pair sing antiphonally to each other (throughout this track, from the beginning, but a particularly nice section: 2.56-4.13).

A Stitchbird is heard close by (2.42, 3.03, 3.20..., 5.56...), and Tuis call occasionally (5.02). The Whiteheads gradually move away, but return by the end of the track.

This recording was made on Tiritiri Matangi Island, and in the background you can hear a Red-billed Gull winging overhead, calling (6.33-7.22)

Track 8: **Kakariki**

Another endemic sound to keep an ear out for in the New Zealand bush, is the chattering call of the lovely little Kakariki; the Red-crowned Parakeet (0.00..., closer 1.29..., 2.00...). You can just hear that there are a pair of them at the end (3.43...)

The Whiteheads are all around in the branches overhead during this track, calling continually, plus a few Saddlebacks and Stitchbirds.



Track 9: **Kereru (New Zealand Pigeon)**

For such a large bird, the New Zealand Pigeon is surprisingly easy to overlook, and its call is quiet and discreet. Here, we are right underneath a pair feeding in the low canopy. Even this close, it is still a subtle call (low “whooom”s, throughout)

Track 10: **Brown Creepers, Rifleman and Yellowheads**

Now we move from the North Island, to hear some of the rare endemic native species found only on the South. Ulva Island, off Stewart Island, is another sanctuary where some of these rarer species have been protected.

First we hear a small flock of Brown Creepers with their chattery, buzzy calls (0.03, 0.15 and throughout, closer at 1.15), as they flit from ground feeding to lower canopy.

The southern relatives of the Whiteheads are the Yellowheads. Perhaps stronger singers, their calls nevertheless have noticeable similarities, particularly the downward cadence of notes (1.54, and closer 3.33). But their repertoire extends to buzzy slurs, twitterings and ringing patterns of notes (1.59...). There is also a call similar to a Saddleback (and it may even be a Saddleback? although I think too high in pitch: 3.07), and another high-pitched call (4.26-5.30).



Weighing only a handful of grams, the Rifleman is New Zealand's smallest bird, and its call is weak and very high-pitched - so high that many people cannot hear it. On this track a small party of them call throughout, often overwhelmed by the calls of other birds. You can just hear their "zwit, zwit..." calls occasionally (try at 1.03, 1.23...)

Later we hear another Kakariki, this time the Yellow-crowned variety (5.20-5.33, 5.54-6.32). Also present are a Robin (0.35...) and Tuis (... 0.45...)

Track 11: **Toutouwai (New Zealand Robin)**

Back to the north Island, and Whirinaki forest. Now we hear the Robin in full voice - actually two of them calling from adjoining territories (beginning of track on). Robins will often call throughout the day in spring, as we hear them here. Their repertoire consists of a variety of chips and trills, interspersed with a characteristic descending series of notes (2.37, 2.51).

In the background are the up-slurred, rasping calls of a Long-tailed Cuckoo (3.04, 3.10, 3.15...), a Fantail (3.10...), and also a few Whiteheads.



Track 12: **Kakas**



New Zealand's large forest parrot, the Kaka, is a real character. Vocally they are exhilarating, their harsh cries carrying for distances as they fly over the forest canopy (0.09...). But it is their more intimate calls, heard from inside the forest that are captivating; shimmying whinnies (1.47...), and liquid whistles (3.17...) communicated one bird to another, punctuated with short cries.

Robins and Whiteheads continue calling in the background, and a kakariki rounds out the track (4.34...).

Track 13: **Tomtit and Wekas**

The Tomtit is a member of the Petroica Robins, the 'red' robins, a family with several species throughout Australia. Although the Tomtit has no red plumage, it is otherwise similar, and the call has obvious affinities. Repeated every five seconds or so, it is a pleasant, tinkling phrase (from beginning of track).



The ground-dwelling Weka is not commonly encountered, but its call is distinctive, a rising series of wails (0.29, 0.51, 2.55 & 4.06), often taken up by other birds in the vicinity. More rarely heard is their deep, resonant boomings, which I'm unsure are either contact calls between a pair, or a kind of territorial 'keep out' signal (beginning around 1.10, more noticeable at 1.39).



Track 14: **Roosting Chorus of Tuis and Waking Moreporks**

Each evening, Tuis will go to roost with an extensive bout of delicate calling, featuring their amazing range of whistles, trills and harsh tones.

At the same time, Moreporks, New Zealand's native forest owls, awake with a series of rising, grating calls (heard distantly from 0.22..., and closely at 1.51), before settling down to their more characteristic "morepork" call (2.11...).

Track 15: **The Little Spotted Kiwi**

Finally, the iconic New Zealand Kiwi. There are 3 species, all rare and endangered, and here we encounter the Little Spotted Kiwi.

First, from close nearby, we hear the male's loud call (0.00-0.34). Meanwhile another bird is foraging only a few meters away, and walks towards us. You can hear its quick, scuffling gait in the leaf litter. Eventually it walks right past (... 0.44...) and off in to the forest. A last Kiwi is heard in the distance (1.46).

