

IN BRIEF

LISTEN TO THE BIRDS

Did you know that the first published recording of birdsong was a Nightingale in 1910?

The sound of birdsong has inspired poets and songwriters and has given immense enjoyment to many people. As far as the birds are concerned, song is their way of communicating with each other. In the absence of visual contact, song enables the birds to communicate through dense vegetation and over long distances. This often creates a problem for us as we peer into the trees or fumble with binoculars trying to catch a glimpse of the elusive bird that won't sit still.

Help is at hand to identify birdsong through the large amount of information, including sound and video clips, available on the internet simply by googling "birdsong".

Whilst the information available specifically on Australian birds is not as extensive as for other continents, the Birds Australia WA website www.birdswa.com.au/bookshop lists CDs, audio tapes and video tapes available for purchase. The "Australian Bird Calls: South-western" CD contains calls of 79 bird species.

It seems that there could be a potential niche for some keen sound recordists to record their local birds. The BBC Nature website www.bbc.co.uk/nature/programmes/radio/dawn_chorus includes advice about how to make sound recordings. You can use a recording device as simple as a video camcorder set on picture and sound, or sound only.

Remember Sir David Attenborough's *Life of Birds* program? You can watch and listen to the Superb Lyrebird do his camera, car alarm and chainsaw impersonations by searching for "video lyrebird" on www.video.google.com. An amazing performance!

Claire Hall



Illustration: Louise Burch