

# 'Rockpool Reflections'

Music for the Renaissance Lute  
with Outback birdsong from Mootwingee.

Composed, Played & Recorded by Andrew Skeoch.

## Field Notes

Although 'Rockpool Reflections' is primarily a gentle music recording, it is interwoven with a tapestry of Australian outback birdsong. This natural soundscape was recorded at **Mootwingee National Park** in outback New South Wales, and represents the diversity of wildlife to be found in this extraordinary area.

### Track 1: Morning at Homestead Creek (Soundscape)

0:51

It is early morning among the gorges and creek flats of Mootwingee. A pair of **Grey Shrike-Thrushes** sing and call animatedly to each other in the sunshine (0:00 on...they can be heard calling intermittently throughout the first half of this recording). The "Crrr" of a **Peaceful Dove** can be heard (0:14, 0:18, 0:22...), along with the 'Min & Henry' mutterings of a **Little Corella** (0:27, 0:38, 0:45) and the distant rollicking call of a **Grey Butcherbird** (0:41). A **Raven** flies overhead with heavy wingbeats (0:48).

### Track 2: Wedgetails (Sarah's Pavan)

5:00

(A pavan is a style of slow dance from renaissance times. This one is dedicated to my wife, Sarah - it was originally composed as a birthday present. It is re-titled, as Wedge-tailed Eagles hold special significance for her.)

A **Corella** flies past (0:04 - 0:10) and later a small flock of **Galahs** (1:43...). Also to be heard are the downward whistles of a distant **Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo** (1:48 - 1:55).

Between music tracks:

The "Oo-le-goo"s and "Crrr"s of **Peaceful Doves** can be heard in the background as a family of **Variegated Fairy-wrens** forage close by, their soft contact calls are heard before a pair of them duet with rich rippling song (4:56).

### Track 3: Footprints

3:10

**Peaceful Doves** continue calling, and the **Grey Thrushes** can still be heard occasionally in the background (0:38, 1:02, 1:30...), along with **White-plumed Honeyeaters** (0:54, 2:49, 2:52).

**Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters** have a diversity of wonderfully wheezy and whiny whistles, here's one of them (2:56), followed by a **Rufous Whistler** beginning a series of plaintive "ee-chou"s (3:05).

### Track 4: Reflections in the Rockpool

6:13

**Rufous Whistlers** are versatile songsters, and here one can be heard going through his repertoire of bubbly trills & whistles (0:26, 0:39, 0:59...). The **Grey Thrush** is still around (0:25, 0:38, 0:58...), as is a **White-plumed Honeyeater** ("chick-o-wee" 0:36 and "chip! 4:37), and the "pink-pink" is from a **Striated Pardalote** (noticeably from 3:05 to 4:20). A **Willy Wagtail** calls repeatedly in the background.

**Tree Martins** nest in the river red gums, and a small group of them are now swooping and fluttering overhead, twittering pleasantly (from around 5:44 on).

### Track 5: The Echidna's Wanderings

5:20

**White-browed Babblers** are sociable birds, living together in family groups of half a dozen or so. A family is collecting twigs for a nest in nearby low bushes, and keeping in contact with sneezy whistles (0:02 to 0:04, 0:21,

0:25, 0:27, 0:39 & 0:42...) and cat-like growling "miaouw"s (2:12, 2:22, 3:26 & 3:49).

An ever-active **Willy Wagtail** sings loudly, fanning his tail from a low branch nearby (from 4:26 on), and a **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** calls again (4:23, 4:29 & 5:15).

#### **Track 6: Wagtail Antics**

2:47

The harsh chattering call is also from the **Willy Wagtail** (0:07), and the **Rufous Whistler** can be heard again (0:40, 1:35).

A **Cockatiel**, a beautiful grey and yellow parrot, gives a few shrill cries from a high branch (2:23 to 2:47), before...

#### **Track 7: Shared Secrets**

4:32

...a small flock of them fly in to join in a communal preen in the sunshine, accompanied by soft contented trilling (from around 0:14 on). A curious **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** flies into a nearby bush, and hops around inquisitively, uttering lovely wheezy whines (1:08, 1:22, 1:39, 1:47, ...).

A small flock of **Inland Thornbills** with their characteristic twitterings (3:20 on) and downslurred trills (eg: 3:44, 4:05), are gleaning for insects on nearby bushes.

#### **Track 8: Hidden Gorge**

5:01

A **Weebill** has been tagging along with the flock of **Thornbills**, and is now to be heard calling its name "wee, weebill" (0:13, 0:21, 0:44, 0:50, 0:56...), while in the distance a **Grey Butcherbird** calls (0:14 & 0:35). A spectacular male **Red-capped Robin** appears, giving its 'telephone ringing' call (1:00 to 2:00), before a **Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo** alights nearby, recognisable from its distinctive downward whistles (2:19 to 3:00).

It is now mid-morning, and the **Tree Martins** may be heard returning (3:20...). **White-plumed Honeyeaters** continue to call from the river gums (3:40, 4:03), and the **Grey Butcherbird** is heard again in the distance (3:57 & 4:17).

This concludes the first half of the soundscape, recorded amongst Mootwingee's gorges and creekbeds. On the second half of the album you will hear birdsong from the open sandplains, from species more adapted to the harsh conditions commonly found in the Australian Outback.

#### **Track 9: Awaiting the Dawn (soundscape)**

0:34

It is first light, and across the ridges may be heard the wonderful sound of **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters** awaking (0:00 on). Their characteristic pre-dawn calls blend together to create a sound that is distinctive of the Outback.

#### **Track 10: From Afar**

3:42

The Spiny's continue, and the bass booming of an **Emu** may just be heard (0:38 - 0:50 & 2:00 - 2:09).

Many Honeyeaters have pre-dawn calls that are distinctively different from their day-time songs. These dainty calls are from **White-plumed Honeyeaters** (3:03 on).

#### **Track 11: Morning Star**

4:02

It is still dark, with the full moon palely illuminating the landscape. On such nights **Magpies** will call from their roosts high in the river gums up and down the riverbed (2:50 ish on...). Also the extraordinary deep booming of a male **Emu** carries across the plain (3:22 - 3:30 & 3:52 - 4:00).

### Track 12: Dewdrops

2:20

**Magpies** and the **Emu** (0:41 - 0:48) continue calling.

A family of **White-winged Fairy-wrens** have been roosting in a thorny acacia bush nearby, which now burst into song (1:55, 2:07,...). Other groups can be heard in the distance, along with the gradually intensifying call of a **Chirruping Wedgebill** (1:59).

### Track 13: Infinite Sky

5:35

The wrens continue, before the creaky voice of a **Brown Songlark** (sometimes described as being like the sound of a wire fence twanging) (3:21 to 3:56 & 4:07) is heard from across the plain.

A flock of tiny **Zebra Finches** are chattering animatedly among themselves as they search for seeds on the ground (from about 4:20), before taking flight (5:32). A **Crested Pigeon** flies past on distinctively whirring wings (5:16).

### Track 14: Heartland (Red Rocks, Blue Sky)

5:19

A **Rufous Songlark** sits on an exposed perch, giving a series of twangy whipcracks (3:35, 3:41, 3:51, 3:57, 4:02 ...), before flying directly upwards on a spectacular song flight (4:49 - 4:56), which is concluded by a dive down to a new perch. Also, a **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** calls (3:27, 3:37...), and a family of **Chestnut-crowned Babblers** return to their bulky stick nest atop a Casuarina tree (5:09 - 5:18).

### Track 15: Twilight

3:43

One of the most vibrantly colourful of all outback birds, the male **Crimson Chat**, calls from the top of a bush in the morning sunshine (1:11, 1:28, 1:32...).

A small group of **Chestnut-rumped Thornbills** fly up from the ground where they have been feeding, to begin a pleasant chorus of their distinctive "teuw"s (2:50 on). A Singing Honeyeater (rather misnamed), flies up to an overlooking branch and gives a series of "tirrup"s (3:29...)

### Track 16: The Homeward Path

7:37

In the distance can be heard **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters** and groups of **Chestnut-crowned Babblers** (around 1:10 on). A **Little Crow** (short "Aak,aak,aak" 2:50-2:51) can be heard here alongside an **Australian Raven** (in the far background, longer mournful descending "Aaaar,aaaar,aaaar" 2:50 - 2:58). These birds look almost identical, and their calls are one of the few ways of telling them apart.

A **Red-backed Kingfisher** is also a treat to come across (three piping calls, 3:02). Also to be heard is the **Rufous Songlark** again (4:27).

A chorus of morning birdsong concludes the album, including **White-plumed Honeyeaters** (6:08, 6:36), a **Willy Wagtail** in the background, **Spiny's** (5:43, 5:58...), **Emus** (esp. around 6:00 - 6:18...), and **Diamond Doves** (5:51, 6:00, 6:13, 6:27...).