Hollis Taylor: violinist/composer/zoömusicologist

Hollis Taylor conducting fieldwork: Newhaven Station, Central Australia, which adjoins Aboriginal freehold land on all sides. (Photo: Jon Rose)

Major research: the pied butcherbird (Cracticus nigrogularis). (see “Zoömusicologists” page for audio link Pied butcherbird.mp3)

A pied butcherbird, Burleigh Heads, Queensland. (Photo: Hollis Taylor)
Other research interests: lyrebirds, bowerbirds, Australian magpies, grey butcherbirds, currawongs, & animal aesthetics.

Left: The interior decorations of a western bowerbird’s avenue bower (Alice Springs). His color preferences are green, white, and shiny objects. Right: The exterior decorations of a great bowerbird’s avenue bower (Darwin) display his similar color preferences. (Photos: Hollis Taylor)

Satin bowerbirds prefer things blue, with a secondary preference to the color yellow (Blue Mountains, New South Wales). (Photo: Hollis Taylor)

Hollis writes: Bowerbird males are vocalists, dancers, architects, interior decorators, collectors, landscape architects, and painters. And bowerbird females are art critics, contemplating what the other sex has created.
Selected Publications


Taylor, Hollis. 2015. We are not so stupid ...animals neither by Vinciane Despret. *Angelaki* 20 (2): 153-61.


Taylor, Hollis. 2015. Lyrebirds mimicking chainsaws: Fact or lie?. *The Conversation* 3 February.


**Compositions Based on Pied Butcherbird Song**

New works include *Absolute Bird* for vocal ensemble, a five-movement song cycle: Racecourse: Alice Springs, Ten Hockets: Bribie Island, Roe Creek Flow, Six Antiphons: Bribie Island, and Madigan 1, 2, 3: Alice Springs, commissioned by The Song Company with a grant from the Australia Council. Recorder virtuoso Genevieve Lacey also commissioned a set of works supported by a grant from the Australia Council: Green Lake, Victoria; Emily and Jessie Gaps, Alice Springs: Gosse @ Sturt, Hugh River, Georges Six, Ormiston Gorge, Alice Springs: Palm @ Ragonesi, Ross River, and Hall’s Creek.

My current works for strings also celebrate the vocalisations of the pied butcherbird: Pied Butcherbird Suite and Bird-Esk for string quartet; and *Absolute Bird* for solo violin: Riffingbirds 1-4, Song Maps: Alice Springs, Night Shift, Solo-Esque, Trailer Park Trash, Macadamia, Briar Ridge, Saleyards, Brisbane Forest Park—Waterworks Road, Bowen at N’Dhala Gate, Ormiston Gorge Coda, Duaringa Traffic, and Voices for violin and tape.

Other pied butcherbird works include Black and White Miniatures for toy piano and video; Cumberdeen Dam V & T for solo bassoon; Lamington Plateau for flute; and Banana Paper, Gowrie Creek, The Bass of Broken Hill, and Ormiston Gorge: A Canonic Manipulation for bass.
An excerpt from a pied butcherbird transcription by Hollis Taylor from a 3½-hour song delivered on Magnetic Island, Queensland, Australia.
A crimson rosella (*Platycercus elegans*), native to E and SE Australia.

Hollis writes: My formal transcription of pied butcherbirds involves music notation software and various other applications, but I often informally keep tabs on the crimson rosella parrots and other birds and frogs that sing outside my study window.