



KEYBIRD

KEYBIRD is an interactive sound installation comprising a musical keyboard that instead of playing musical notes, has a different birdsong on every key.

The work was created in response to a commission for the East Sussex Wildlife Weekend and is based on the observational notes made by an RSPB Warden over the course of one bird-watching year from his base at Rye Harbour on the south coast of England. The calls of the 76 different birds are arranged in alphabetical order along the keyboard and the visitor is left to experiment with playing the different notes.

The simplicity of the installation means that it comes across as very accessible to people of ages. Upon entering the space they see the musical keyboard and are drawn to playing some of the notes. After a brief moment of surprise and puzzlement, whilst the connection is made with the birdsong that results from the pressing of the keys, an exploration of the instrument ensues. As the players contrast and compare the different calls and compose imaginary dawn choruses, they move between the roles of observer, as they identify the different species through their different musical signatures, and that of composer as they treat the calls as musical phrases in their own right.

Separate versions of the work exist for French, Flemish and German languages.