
Excitatory and suppressive features of auditory neurons in avian cortex

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Abstract

1 The ability to process auditory signals and ignore the noise is an influential reason
2 why animals depend on acoustic signals for communication and survival. Previous
3 work on auditory receptive fields has uncovered many different types of auditory
4 neurons: broadband neurons are tuned to signals across all frequency ranges but
5 only at a specific time. Narrow-band neurons respond only to signals in very
6 specific time and frequency windows. While there has been a lot of work in
7 describing receptive fields of different auditory processing regions, little has been
8 done to connect this work with computational theories of auditory processing. Here
9 we analyze responses of auditory neurons in songbirds in four different regions
10 in auditory cortex to various songs and find various principles that explain how
11 auditory processing is organized. First, there are more suppressive features than
12 excitatory features further downstream, indicating more feature selectivity as the
13 signal is transmitted through cortex. Second, quadrature pairs and cross-orientation
14 suppression, etc. This principles is consistent with the time-dilation theory of
15 auditory processing.

16 1 Introduction

17 To address these questions of how the receptive fields of auditory neurons are organized, we utilized
18 the statistical model of maximum likelihood estimation to determine the receptive fields of auditory
19 neurons. After computing these receptive fields, we fit them as a linear combination of gammatones
20 and gaussian filters in order to analyze the features of these receptive fields. After performing this
21 modelling, we conclude that (1) suppression is increased as a signal is transduced along the auditory
22 pathway, (2) auditory signalling is composed primarily of broadband and narrowband receptive fields
23 with little intermediate receptive fields, (3) Overall, these findings show that ...

24 2 Quadratic model

Methods Using a published dataset of neural responses in songbirds to various songs on the CRCNS data sharing website, we sought to build a model that maps the input stimuli to the collected neural responses with high probability. The dataset included neural responses in songbirds from various regions in auditory cortex (mld, field L, OV, and CM) to different song recordings. Treating each song as a d -dimensional vector over time x , we computed the predicted response Y' of the model as follows:

$$Y = \sigma(a + \mathbf{h} \cdot x + x\mathbf{J}x^T)$$

where σ is the sigmoidal function

$$\sigma(x) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-x}}.$$

25 Here h is a d -dimensional filter that illustrate the linear features of the model. \mathbf{J} is a $d \times d$ -dimensional
 26 matrix comprised of the quadratic features that best fit the model. a is simply the bias of the neuron.
 27 All of the parameters a, h, \mathbf{J} were fit by minimizing the negative log-likelihood of the model.

28 We divided the training data into fourths. Three-fourths of the data were used to calculate the gradient
 29 and the other fourth was used as a validation set to determine convergence. We ran 4-fold cross
 30 validation using a different fourth of the training data as a holdout set and averaged each parameter
 31 over the four trials to control for variability in the optimization process. To test the model, we held
 32 out recordings for each neuron and then tested our model on these held out recordings.

33 **Model accuracy**

34 **Receptive fields** In order to compute the basis of pertinent dimensions of \mathbf{J} along which the
 35 neuron responds most strongly, we performed eigendecomposition of \mathbf{J} to get the eigenvectors and
 36 eigenvalues. This resulted in a number of eigenvectors and eigenvalues, only a few of which were
 37 significant. After significance testing, only a few eigenvectors remained for each neuron. These
 38 eigenvectors illustrate the dimensions along which a neuron responds most maximally to and thus
 39 can be considered the receptive fields of the neuron. Eigenvectors with positive eigenvalues are
 40 excitatory features and those with negative eigenvalues are suppressive features. An example of
 41 eigendecomposition is shown in

42 **Excitatory and suppressive features**

43 **3 Linear combination of gammatones**

Methods Gammatones are widely used as auditory filters. In order to model the receptive fields
 computed above, we attempt to build \mathbf{J} using a linear combination of gammatones. A gammatone is
 described by the following equation:

$$g(t) = a(t - t_0)^{n-1} e^{-2\pi b(t-t_0)} \cos(2\pi f(t - t_0) + \phi),$$

44 where a controls the amplitude, t_0 controls the onset time, n controls the filter order, b controls the
 45 decay rate, f controls the central frequency, and ϕ controls the phase. Since, this is only a function of
 46 time, we take the outer product of $g(t)$ and a Gaussian filter along the frequency dimension, with
 47 central frequency f_0 and standard deviation σ to get a 2-d dimensional receptive field, denoted as S .
 48 Example gammatones are shown in figure.

With a set of gammatones we can approximate \mathbf{J} as

$$\mathbf{J}' = \sum_i S S^T.$$

49 We ignore any weights as the S matrices are normalized when performing the fit. We choose to fit the
 50 onset time, filter order and decay rate of the gammatone, as well as the central frequency and standard
 51 deviation of the gaussian using differential evolution. All other parameters are either redundant
 52 because normalization is performed (a) or irrelevant to the problem we are interested in (ϕ). We seek
 53 to minimize the mean difference between \mathbf{J} as computed using the quadratic model and the new \mathbf{J}' .
 54 The excitatory and suppressive parts of \mathbf{J} were fit separately and only the significant eigenvectors are
 55 taken into consideration. The exact approach we took to solve the differential evolution problem can
 56 be read about in

57 **Results**

58 **Analysis of different auditory regions**

59 **Cross-order suppression**

60 **Quadrature pairs**

61 4 Discussion

62 References

63 References follow the acknowledgments. Use unnumbered first-level heading for the references. Any
64 choice of citation style is acceptable as long as you are consistent. It is permissible to reduce the font
65 size to small (9 point) when listing the references. **Remember that you can go over 8 pages as**
66 **long as the subsequent ones contain *only* cited references.**

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