

# How loud are we? An Artistic take on a Noisy problem



## An “Artistic” outreach for a “Scientific” issue

Air is a great medium for light. It allows us to see distant mountains and even stars that are light years away. Visibility underwater is measured in tens of feet, but sound travels much, much farther; all the way across oceans in fact. Sound also travels faster in sea water — about four times faster than it does in the air at 1,500 meters per second.

Throughout millions of years of evolution, whales, dolphins and other underwater creatures, including some invertebrates such as shrimp, crabs, sea urchins, have developed communication methods to utilise this aural advantage. They use sound to find food, orient themselves, maintain social groups, and, basically, to survive in the deep, blue sea.

But recently their well-tuned systems have come under attack from the symphony of human-caused noises emanating from cargo and commercial ships, offshore construction, seismic fossil fuel exploration, and navy sonar. According to Ocean Conservation Research, the ocean may be 10 times noisier now than it was just 50 years ago.

## “Sounding Nature” - The map that lets you hear what the world would sounds like without humans

Since its beginning in 2014, “*Cities and Memory*” (global collaborative sound project) has created sound maps focused on protest, sacred places, and photographs. Its newest project, however, steps away from humans and instead focuses on the areas where the natural world is undisturbed. *Sounding Nature* is the biggest global collection of nature sounds, featuring nearly 500 sounds from 55 countries, from jungles to glaciers to underwater shrimp recordings.

The map has two parts: the field recording of the sound itself, and then the musical remix it inspired.

The initial aim was to showcase what a map of the world would sound like if you couldn't hear the humans. That's really difficult to do because humans are really, really noisy, and we're getting louder all the time. Noises in the ocean have doubled every 10 years for the past 50 years, and the trend holds true even for remote areas. The other side is to show how the noise we make, as human beings, can have a serious and dramatic impact on the natural world. Beyond simple irritation, elevated noise levels can cause significant changes in both the habitat and physiology of the creatures that call the ocean home.