

KRAUSE, Bernie: *Wild Soundscapes: Discovering the Voice of the Natural World*, revised edition, foreword by Roger Payne, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2016, 223p.

This new revised edition of *Wild Soundscapes*, originally published by Wilderness Press in 2002, shows both how much of an achievement it was in its time, and how topical it still is for soundscape ecologists as it is for geographers, historians, environmentalists and philosophers. In fact, inasmuch as it allows an entry-level dip *and* a professional deepening at natural sound recording knowledge, we could abstractly consider four equally rewarded kinds of readers: *a*) The professional working on the fields of Acoustic and Soundscape Ecology from any given perspective: landscape architecture, wildlife conservation, local history, aesthetics...; *b*) The field recording aficionado, from the sound enthusiast planning her or his first recordings to the well-trained ornithologist looking for further advice in bird sound recording; *c*) Sound artists and Sounds Studies researchers; and *d*) Environmental activists, particularly those concerned in noise pollution and global warming.

*Listening to the Biophony.*- The first and probably most important lesson of the book is about learning how to listen. By “[l]earning to read and capture the collective acoustic expressions of living organisms from wild habitats” (p. 2), we could challenge the ways in which to listen to and record the myriad of sounds constantly surrounding us, grouped by Krause into three basic sources: “geophony”, “biophony”, and “anthropophony” (that is to say, earth, non-human animal and human-produced sounds).

*Hearing and recording.*- Even though *Wild Soundscapes* is not a guidebook or instruction manual, at least not in the traditional sense, some of

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the best features about such books are certainly at work here, e.g. letting you know enough but still letting enough blanks for you to go and fill them.

After some brief notes on the anatomy of the ear and the history of natural sound recording, the book is full of tips for field recording trips that will allow you to get started with simple sound recording equipment (mics, recorders, earphones, etc.), but also to take field notes, learn some basic recording production techniques and, finally, archive and create projects and an audio library. It also provides beautiful notes on some bioregions and sounds to explore, such as deserts, rainforests, African dry forests, island habitats, the Amazon, marine ecosystems, arctic habitats...

*Soundscapes and knowledge.*- In spite of Krause's deep modesty, philosophical and epistemological questions of the highest complexity are also dealt with throughout the book, such as the problem of recording itself, and the fundamental differences between hearing and listening from a technological perspective:

Microphones amplify sound in certain concentrated ways and focus our attention, enabling us to listen more critically. They let you differentiate between what to listen *to* and what to listen *for* in much the same way that a microscope or a pair of binoculars can increase your ability to focus on, identify, and observe details in the visual realm. Through a good pair of headphones, you hear pieces of the aural fabric in such clear detail that you will be amazed by all that you have previously missed. You will also become more cognizant of things to avoid that interfere with our experience of still-wild places [...]. (p. 7)

*Sound, noise, ecology.*- Finally, Krause's (probably) most important work to date allows us to be permanently reminded of some of the most fundamental lessons of Soundscape Ecology:

- a) to understand soundscapes as complex and dynamic ensembles, neither a mere sum of parts nor a closed picture.
- b) to question the limits of given landscapes, and the notion of limit itself.
- c) to study noise as a socio-political product, and to calibrate its danger to both human and non-human animals.
- d) to detect changes and pauperization of our natural surroundings in the context of advanced capitalism and global warming.

From the first works on the notions of "soundscape" and "acoustic ecology" by R. Murray Schafer and the World Soundscape Project throughout the 60s and 70s as a field study primarily concerned with the relationship between soundscape and listener, to the contemporary works on the matter

by a rich network of soundscape ecologists, environmentalists, historians and sound researchers, Krause's work remains as one of the fundamental pillars of the field, a wonder in all its simplicity and humbleness.

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