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Tracking Sound, As Silence Becomes Extinct

By Jen Carlson



Did you hear the sounds of silence are nearly behind us? According to audio ecologist Gordon Hempton, quiet spaces world-wide are being taken over by noise. [Newsweek](#) reports that the sonic scientist believes silence in our world "is rapidly disappearing, even in the most remote places." So how many are left? Fewer than a dozen in America, and zero in Europe!

According to [his book](#), back in 1983 he found 21 places in Washington state that were noise-free for 15 minute intervals (and where natural silence reigned for many square miles), and by 2007 that number was down to 3. Even in national parks it's rare to get more

than 5 minutes of silence anymore. Hempton says that humans and planes are at the top of the blame list, and if you want to preserve silence, then you can STFU and contact members of Congress, telling them to support your right to quiet (ie: ask the FAA to re-route aircrafts around national parks).

On the other side of the sound spectrum, the [Smalls Street Sounds](#) is actually cataloging noise. Their interactive project captures what they dub "diverse and inspiring" sounds nationwide. Here in NYC you can hear a woman talking about her rash while waiting in line, or listen to one person's walk through the hall of the Met, or eavesdrop on a beer order. Yes, even the internet is getting louder by the day!



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