

Hear where you are: How sound not only informs, but places us

EurekaAlert!

A new book explores sound as a means of forming a relationship with our world

School children learn that humans have five senses, all of which are used to help make decisions. Sound is typically thought of as a means of gathering information. But in a new book – *Hear Where We Are: Sound, Ecology, and Sense of Place* – author Michael Stocker, Executive Director of Ocean Conservation Research, proposes that sound serves a far deeper function. Sound is offered up as a means of helping people to form relationships with their environment.

Throughout history hearing and sound perception have been typically framed in the context of how sound conveys information and how that information influences the listener. *Hear Where We Are* inverts this premise and examines how humans and other hearing animals use sound to establish acoustical relationships with their surroundings. In doing so, the reader learns that hearing is the perception that allows animals to gauge the size, shape and density of their surroundings, sensing their placement within them. Hearing is the sense that allows us to perceive our environment in dimensions obscured from our vision, out of reach of our touch, and downwind of our sense of smell.

Chapter one examines how sounds like familiar voices, alarms, and the sounds of nature, culture and media influence how people feel, before chapter two explores how individuals manipulate their acoustical world to serve their interests. Chapter three breaks down the physics of sound and physiology of hearing. Chapter four is a "sound menagerie" of how other animals hear, leading to chapter five which examines the foundation of "sound communication" as a visceral connection with others and our surroundings through sound.

Stocker writes, "The larger mission of this book is to lead us into a stronger appreciation of the world in which we live. I hope the journey through this work will enhance the reader's perceptions; inviting a deeper listening, and ultimately encouraging a more conscious participation with their environment – allowing you, the reader, to truly hear where you are."

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