

Creative Adventure: Create a 'soundscape'

Hearing is a very important sense for many animals. They use sound to help them bond and mate, locate prey, feed their young and to avoid predators. This activity gets you more aware of your own hearing too: How important is sound for humans?

Research and preparation

Note: *research and preparation are optional. You can still go straight out and do this activity.*

Before you set off, why not familiarize yourself with the calls of coastal birds and animals, such as seals, puffins, gannets and warblers? You can listen to sounds on these websites:

- <http://birdix.com>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/birdsong.shtml>
- http://www.fatbirder.com/links/images_and_sound/bird_song.html

You could order this CD of animal sounds from the British coast.

http://shop.bl.uk/mall/productpage.cfm/BritishLibrary/ISBN_9780712305334/86650

You might also want to listen to these Radio 4 programmes about Selkie, a Farne Islands seal

- http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/soundscape_seal.shtml

What other natural sounds might you hear at the coast?

Is there something about natural sounds you are really curious about?

Recording what you hear on your visit

Just because you're making a soundscape doesn't mean you have to use sound! You could use a mix of these methods, or choose what suits you.

Sound and vision

As you explore a place, you could draw a map and note down what you heard where. You don't need to make the map very precise, more like a pirate's treasure map.

Take a sketchbook and for everything you hear, draw what it sounds like. Try not to draw the object or animal that makes the sound. Think instead about the shape and feeling of the sound. Is a bird screech like a dagger or is a roaring wave like a thundercloud?

Sound and music

Can you translate the sound into music? You don't need to be able to read and write music properly. Just use your own way. Can you tap out the sound's rhythm then note it down with symbols? Can you show how loud or soft it is? Or how high or low it is?

Do any of the sounds remind you of repeated words, which could give you the start of a song?

Record sound with gadgets

You may want to record sound with an audio recorder. Some mobile phone phones also have the ability to record snippets of sound too.

You could edit these together into your own soundscape using a computer at home. You can download some free sound editing software here:

- <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>



Making your soundscape

When you're back from your trip, can you make a soundscape to share with others?

- It's a good idea to find a focus for your piece: Is it about a particular animal? Is it about a particular place?
- If you recorded sounds in pictures, you could make it as a map or a painting.
- If you recorded sounds in words, you could arrange the words to make a poem.
- If you recorded sounds with musical notation, could you arrange them into patterns of sound and add some words to make a piece of music? What instruments or voices will you use to play the music?
- If you recorded sounds with technology, how can you edit them together, perhaps with a spoken or written commentary or with drawings?
- If you used a mix of methods, how will you put them together?

