



## *How The Sounds Of Nature Affect Your Well-being*

Researchers have long known there are benefits from being in nature:

- \* Living around trees can help you live longer.
- \* Walking in the woods is good for your mood.
- \* Being near water can have positive effects on your well-being.

But it's not just what you see that makes an impact. A new study finds that natural sounds offer health benefits too. A group of scientists decided to study the merits of nature using their ears instead of their eyes. "Our research team has been studying the acoustic environment for quite a few years now, but from the perspective of the negative impacts of noise pollution," Rachel Buxton, one of the lead authors and post-doctoral researcher "However, being an ornithologist and avid outdoors person myself, I've always been curious about the inverse — what are the beneficial impacts of natural sounds?" Being a bird expert helped spur the interest in sounds.

"Most birders identify different types of birds based on their sound, plus hearing birds singing and the wind rustling the leaves is central to experiencing nature," she says. "There is plenty of evidence that spending time in natural areas is good for our health — but typically this research is done from a visual perspective but we were curious what the role is of sounds we hear in these spaces."

For their research, published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Buxton and her team identified three dozen studies that examined the health benefits of natural sound. Some examples they found reported in those studies included decreased pain, lowered stress, improved mood, and better cognitive function.

"We found many health-bolstering sites in parks — sites with abundant natural sounds and little interference from noise," Buxton says. "Yet, parks that are more heavily visited or near urban areas are more likely to be inundated with noise. That means that many park visitors are not reaping the health benefits found in more quiet spaces." However, despite human-made noises being heard most of the time at sites in urban locations, birds were still heard about 60% of the time and geophysical sounds like wind and rain heard about 19% of the time.

Not all natural sounds deliver the same benefits, the researchers found. For example, they discovered that the sounds of water had the largest impact on improving positive emotions and health outcomes, while bird sounds ease stress and annoyance. There was also evidence that more different types of natural sounds — more types of birds singing versus just one type of bird — have benefits over fewer sounds. "In so many ways the pandemic has emphasized the importance of nature for our health. As traffic declined during quarantine, many people connected with the acoustic environment in a whole new way — noticing the relaxing sounds of birds singing just outside their window. How remarkable that these sounds are also good for our health," Buxton says.

"Next time you visit your favourite park, close your eyes — take in all the sounds: the birds singing, the leaves rustling the leaves in the trees. These sounds are beautiful, they're inspiring, and it turns out — they're good for our health. Nature's beautiful sounds and the spaces deserve our protection."

***Farming Secrets says: Sounds Of Nature Can Both Lower Your Stress And Improve Your Mood. Try It Daily.***

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