

The Sounds from a Wind Farm in Early Spring

nr Berlin-Bernau, March 23/25 2021

On listening to an audio stream placed beside a rotating humming wind generator in an agricultural environment, cycles of bird song, weather and distance.

This wind generator - one in a group of around 25 towers – is situated in the flat Brandenburg countryside north of Berlin. A surprising amount of wildlife seems to be able to co-exist with the humming physical presence of these huge towers, especially a good variety of small birds, whose habitat is open fields and patchy woodland, such as song thrushes, sky and wood larks. There are also many deer. The stream was set up for 3 days, with microphones hidden in a low bush near an unused hunting hide at the edge of the trees, to listen to the combination of green technology, agriculture and nature at this location. Udo Noll has termed microphones set up in such places as 'anthropophones', that enable us to hear the audible interactions between the human and the natural worlds both problematic and positive. Given the ever increasing demands for clean energy this swishing, rotating and humming is likely to dominate the sonic future in rural areas.

The generators follow the rise and fall of wind speeds and the changes of its direction. Sometimes they are becalmed. The mechanism emits unpredictable sharp metallic twangs every now and again that reverberate through the towers and out into the surrounding landscape. The ever changing winds gives these machines a seemingly organic character of their own and sometimes quirky musicality.

This audio stream ran continuously and recordings were made often during the period. This selection can be heard on the radio.aporee sound map.

<https://aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60341>

1) Pure rotating air – March 23, 4.28am

Pure swishing rotating air during the dark night. There are no other sounds.

<https://aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60341>

2) Strong airy rotation, loud hums and the first bird of dawn – March 23, 6.33am

The first bird to sing this morning was a distant skylark. Strong rotation with crows, thrushes and larks.

<https://aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60349>

3) Strong rotation with crows, thrushes, larks – March 23, 7.11am

<https://aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60351>

4) Wind farm dawn, ravens, song thrush, slow generator speeding up – March 24, 5.29am

Around 4 minutes into the recording the generator speeds up and its hum rises in pitch, but the wind is very light and it soon drops again. Birds singing include song thrush, chaffinch, skylark, ravens, crows. Very distant cranes can be heard towards the end.

<https://aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60361>

5) Early morning, song thrush and woodlark, generator twangs – March 24, 7.40am

<https://aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60362>

6) Morning, becalmed generator hum, passing helicopter, beautiful bird song – March 24, 8.50am

The generator sounds almost stationary there is so little wind. Its hum is quiet and gives space for the lovely bird song. The song thrush at this spot is a virtuoso and the woodlark so melodic.

<https://aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60363>

7) Varying rotation in the late morning, a chaffinch sings – March 24, 11.40am

<https://aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60364>

8) Late afternoon rising drone, song thrush, chaffinch – March 24, 16.32pm

<https://aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60365>

9) Dusk, becalmed generator, the virtuoso song thrush falls silent – March 24, 18.56pm

<https://aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60366>

10) Nighttime - a monster machine appears from nowhere, becalmed generator – March 24, 19.15pm

Between 6 and 8pm on this evening a group of people listened to this stream and chatted about it on Telegram. We were all extremely surprised (alarmed even) when this huge fossil fuel machine moved nearer and nearer to the mics and then receded. Nobody knows what it is, but there was plenty of speculation in the chat – someone suggested a military tank. Most likely it is a large tractor that, without visual information, probably sounds bigger and closer than it actually was. Other works sounds are audible in the far distance - also unknown. There is no wind, the generator is not rotating, but still hums continuously and twangs occasionally.

<https://aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60367>

The becalmed drone continues with twangs and owls – March 24, 19.59pm

There is light rustling in the leaves very close to the mics. Again unknown - maybe mice.

<https://aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60368>

Stronger wind the next day, fast rotation and a very close sparrow – March 25, 10.05am

One advantage of an audio stream is the mics are left alone - no humans are present. This means that wildlife sometimes comes very close and maybe even investigates. One hears this happening without really knowing who is there. It could be a falling leaf, a hungry mouse, a breath of wind or a fluttering bird.

<https://aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60369>

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