

The Soundscape Speaks - *Soundwalking* revisited (2021)

By Hildegard Westerkamp

It has often been said during this past year of the pandemic that Covid is 'only the beginning' and that the much larger crisis ahead of us is climate change. An obvious question to ask then is: What is our relationship to the environment? And is the natural environment interesting enough to us – indeed, do we know enough about it - that we would *want* to protect and save it from further ravages?

The sound environment has much to tell us - it simply 'voices' all activities - and if we dare to really listen, we may sense the depth of the environmental trouble the world is facing.

During the past year I decided to re-examine the many sound recordings I have made since approximately 1977/78, when I got my chops in field recording while producing and broadcasting my radio program *Soundwalking* on Vancouver Co-operative Radio. Without knowing it then, it formed the base of my recording approach for many years to come. The idea of including my voice while recording the environment was there from the start and was based in the desire to acknowledge my recording presence to the radio listener. In other words, in speaking together – acoustic environment and voice – a relationship between soundscape and human vocal expression was revealed.

Upon the kind invitation from the *BEAST FEaST 2021* to create a new sound piece, I decided to use the opportunity to reflect back on my more than 40 years of sound recording and composing with environmental sound. I have brought together many of my recordings and compositional approaches in a fluid stream of listening while also softly speaking my mind about issues of soundscape ecology. The festival's theme is "Recalibration". *The Soundscape Speaks* is an invitation to open yourselves to the complexities of listening itself and the possibilities it may offer to recalibrating your own relationship to the environment.

Length: 36:45