

Old Growth Playback

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I am applying for funding to support the completion and public presentation of Old Growth Playback, a set of four multimedia works based on ecological research of forest soundscapes across time and space at HJ Andrews Experimental Forest in Blue River, Oregon. These works prompt us to become familiar with sonic forest spaces and our role in them through listening. They present questions concerning the sonic character of old growth forest now and the inevitably different old growth of the future. Through a consideration of beyond-human soundscapes, we can speculate on what might be important to invertebrates, to humans, to non-invertebrate animals, fungi and plants. These four audio works will be presented through radio broadcast, as digital audio, and as a 4:1 spatialized sound installation. A print and online component will contextualize the sound work with text, photos, and graphics that elaborate on concept, process, observation, and speculation for each of the 4 works.

The focus of these works is on cryptic soundscapes beyond the reach of humans with typical hearing ability, either sonically, temporally, or spatially. Within this, there is a focus on an emergent quality: a dynamic assemblages of "introduced" and "native" species alike - including humans, the sounds they create, and their affects on aural architecture.

The composition "Old Growth Playback" involves literal playback of audio in forests, juxtaposing multiple aural architectures between contrasting sites. I composed a multi-channel sound piece of recordings from old-growth forest and amplified it in logged, monoculture, and naturally burned forests. The introduced composition was superimposed on the real-time soundscape, including anthropogenic sound and the sonic character of these forests, speculating as to what components might be present in future old growth forest soundscapes.

"Canopy Litterfall/ Needle Cohort Study" features two interacting sonic components: simulated sounds of litterfall hitting the mossy forest floor of old growth forest, and a structure that is determined by a scientific study on the growth and loss of individual needles on trees in a commercial plantation. These habitats are a stark contrast architecturally and sonically; by inserting the sounds of old growth into the anthropogenic structure of commercial forest, we can consider what vibrations soil organisms might be sensing, and how this might differ for them across contrasting habitats.

"Lookout Creek (Eighth Notes)" uses quantitative sampling to document the myriad of sonic textures, pitches and combinations that can occur in a fixed point in a stream - thus making a tangible representation of what might ordinarily seem like an indecipherable stream of noise, from an underwater listening positionality. This work considers the complex architecture of stream acoustics, how we might grow more familiar with each stream site's acoustic details through isolation and repetition, and how these sounds might be perceived by aquatic species.

"Deer Creek Restoration" features water sampling of creek sections before and after the recovery of streamflow complexity and reversal of waterway restriction imposed by the Army Corps of Engineers in the mid-20th Century. The sound work focuses on stream acoustics that sonically evoke the contrast in water movement between the restricted channel; restoration area, and restored creek.