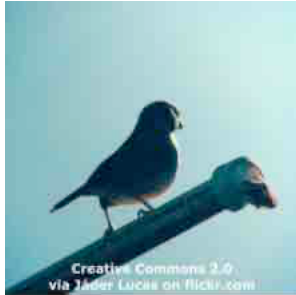


Traffic noise may be making birdsong less calming

10th September 2026



Listening to birds singing has a positive effect on our mental health and well-being. Birdsong is one of the most beautiful sounds in nature. Conversely, noise from traffic is annoying and can increase our stress. A new study from the University of Surrey in the

UK suggests that the noise from traffic may reduce the positive effects of birdsong on our mood. Environmental psychologist Dr Eleanor Ratcliffe said: "Traffic noise undoubtedly affects the psychological benefits of natural soundscapes." She said we need to think more carefully about adding green spaces to towns, "so that people enjoy such areas to the fullest". She also suggested lowering speed limits near parks.

More than 1,500 people took part in the study. They listened to nine different soundscapes of natural sounds and traffic noise. The people then answered questions about how relaxed and refreshed they felt after listening to the sounds. The researchers found that listening to birdsong benefited well-being. However, even at low levels, traffic noise reduced feelings of well-being. Researcher Dr Melissa Marselle said the modern world is noisy. She said we need to investigate the impact of traffic noise on nature's sounds and whether it negatively affects their benefits. She added that we need to identify more quiet outdoor spaces to help people who are feeling stressed.

Sources: oup.com / theguardian.com / phys.org

Writing

Governments need to breed birds and release them into towns. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

birds / mental health / birdsong / nature / traffic noise / stress / mood / green spaces / natural sounds / the modern world / noisy / benefits / outdoor spaces / researcher

True / False

- 1) The article says singing helps the well-being of birds. T / F
- 2) The article says birdsong is the most beautiful sound in nature. T / F
- 3) Traffic noise may reduce the positive effects of listening to birdsong. T / F
- 4) A psychologist wants to see speed limits reduced on roads. T / F
- 5) The researchers listened to the song of 1,500 different birds. T / F
- 6) People who took part in the study said they hated the sound of traffic. T / F
- 7) The article says low levels of traffic does not affect enjoying birdsong. T / F
- 8) A researcher said we need more outdoor spaces for stressed people. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. effect | a. lessen |
| 2. annoying | b. open air |
| 3. reduce | c. look into |
| 4. affects | d. irritating |
| 5. enjoy | e. find |
| 6. answered | f. benefit from |
| 7. noisy | g. impact |
| 8. investigate | h. loud |
| 9. identify | i. replied to |
| 10. outdoor | j. influences |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What are the most relaxing sounds in the world?
- c) What noises in our modern world do you like and dislike?
- d) Would you like a singing bird as a pet?
- e) Would you download an audio file of birdsong?
- f) How noisy is the modern world?
- g) What do you think of lowering speed limits to hear birdsong?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1. birds singing has a positive effect | a. is annoying |
| 2. Birdsong is one of the most beautiful | b. of well-being |
| 3. Conversely, noise from traffic | c. limits near parks |
| 4. environmental | d. after listening |
| 5. She also suggested lowering speed | e. are feeling stressed |
| 6. More than 1,500 people took | f. sounds in nature |
| 7. how relaxed and refreshed they felt | g. psychologist |
| 8. traffic noise reduced feelings | h. on nature's sounds |
| 9. investigate the impact of traffic noise | i. on our mental health |
| 10. outdoor spaces to help people who | j. part in the study |

Discussion – Student B

- How do you feel when you listen to birds singing?
- How often do you listen to birds singing?
- Are there any sounds in nature better than birdsong?
- What do you think of the sound of traffic?
- Are there any traffic sounds that are nice?
- What soundscapes are there when you are in bed?
- What are your favourite birds?
- Do all birds sing sweetly?

Spelling

- a positive ceeftf on our mental health
- noise from traffic is oangnnyi
- noise from traffic may edurec
- tneovennamrli psychologist
- efitbnes of natural soundscapes
- She also suegdtesg lowering speed limits
- tnaural sounds
- feelings of lewl-ebgni
- the ornmed world is noisy
- we need to eievtagsitn
- the piamct of traffic noise
- quiet utrdooo spaces

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. d	3. a	4. j	5. f
6. i	7. h	8. c	9. c	10. b

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions.
(Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	Where does the article say birdsong is one of the most beautiful sounds?
2.	What does the article say traffic noise is?
3.	What did a study say traffic can reduce the positive benefits of?
4.	What does a psychologist want to add to towns?
5.	Where did a researcher want lower speed limits?
6.	How many people participated in the study?
7.	How many different soundscapes did the study participants listen to?
8.	What did researchers say listening to birdsong benefited?
9.	What does a researcher say about the modern world?
10.	Who does a researcher want quiet outdoor spaces for?

Speaking – Nature

Rank these with your partner. Put the best things for our well-being at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|------------|-----------------------|
| • Birdsong | • Flowers |
| • Sunlight | • Mountains |
| • Trees | • Beaches |
| • Rivers | • Puppies and kittens |

Answers – True False

1	F	2	F	3	T	4	T	5	F	6	F	7	F	8	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.