

Deck Sounds

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Our property borders on a neighborhood park. From the small, elevated deck on back of the house you see a spectrum of tall trees, leafy shrubs and green grass. Only a few housetops are visible on the other side of the park during the summer and fall when the trees are in full foliage. In the chill from late autumn through early spring it is pleasant to sit on the deck, face the sun, and soak up the bright sunshine that warms your face and clothing.

Whenever you sit on the deck, whatever the season, if you close your eyes and listen carefully, all sorts of sounds are suddenly there, as if by magic. Some of these sounds are heard frequently while others are buried in the background.

Sounds routinely heard are usually loud or obnoxious, or perhaps both. We mentally note these sounds even though no action may be required on our part. These sounds include such things as the whine of a neighbor's lawn mower, the squeal of a motorcycle accelerating away from a stop sign, the drone of a low-flying airplane or the whoop-whoop of a helicopter, the wail of the police siren or fire truck racing to an emergency, the neighborhood trash truck on its weekly journey, or the warning "beep beep" of construction equipment at a nearby worksite. At least once a week the tornado siren blares its long, wavy tones across the quiet landscape. Hopefully this is only a test and does not require an active response.

There are some sounds, however, that often go "unheard." Have you ever lived in a house with a cuckoo clock? Every hour the little bird faithfully emerges from its wooden cave and sings the appropriate number of cuckoo's to tell you the time. However, after living with this funny little creature for a while, there is a tendency to ignore (or not hear) its hourly chirping unless you are standing next to the clock. My uncle was visiting us and was not conditioned to the hourly visitor. The next morning he mentioned that he heard the bird every hour during the night. I never heard it!

This brings us to other sounds that you hear, or don't hear, while sitting on your deck.

Hidden in the background are sounds not typically noticed by most people as they go about their daily routine. These sounds become obvious only if you listen carefully, for example, while "sitting on your deck." Next time you have a few minutes, go outside, sit quietly, close your eyes, and listen to the restless wind rustling through the tree tops, open your ears to a variety of bird songs and the occasional squirrel in nearby trees, hear the pulsating hum of traffic on an interstate highway (this highway is about one-half mile away from my deck), or, after a rain, sense the rush of water through the drainage creek in the park outback. If atmospheric conditions are right, the sound of a train whistle can be heard as the train toots its warning as it hurries through a crossing that is about two miles away. All these sounds are low in volume and easily missed. Nevertheless, they have a continuous presence in the world we live in. They are most noticeable while "sitting on the deck."

The sounds mentioned here are mainly daytime sounds. What would you hear at night? One thing you will not find while "sitting on the deck" is true silence.

P.S. My neighbor says, after a rain, if it is very, very quiet, and you listen very, very carefully, you can almost hear the grass grow. ☺