

Listen:

A streambox relaying real-time sounds is located on the shingle beach at the southernmost tip of Walney Island. It faces the Atlantic Ocean across the bay from Barrow-in-Furness. In Autumn, seals come to the beach to give birth. From mid April, it is home to a large colony of gulls. Sandwich terns, eiders and other waterfowl and waders can be heard on the water, the beach and in the air. The open microphone gives listeners access, without disturbing the fragile habitat on the spit.

The streambox sits on a concrete plinth above the tideline. Stereo microphones in a roughly binaural arrangement convey a variety of sounds from all directions. Human activity is apparent in sounds of passing vessels: catamarans carrying personnel to and from the offshore wind farm; ships transporting nuclear waste to the Sellafield reprocessing plant up the coast; small fishing boats and leisure craft. Sometimes you can hear the voices of canoeists.

Low-flying military aircraft on training and reconnaissance are also a regular occurrence. These sounds remind us that the spit is situated close to a town whose economy and culture is historically based on shipbuilding, steel making and heavy engineering. Beside the sounds of the gull colony, seals, et al, you can often hear insects flying past the microphones and occasionally small mammals snuffling at the fluffy wind protection either side of the box. Cattle which graze parts of the island can be heard, sometimes startlingly close.

Sounds of the spit rise and fall with the tide, which brings marine creatures near the listening point [Map 1], or further away as the waterline recedes [Map 2]. The surface area of the peninsula also fluctuates, as the expanse of mudflats is alternately revealed and inundated, creating an internationally important seabird habitat in the inter-tidal zone.



### South Walney Nature Reserve Open Microphone

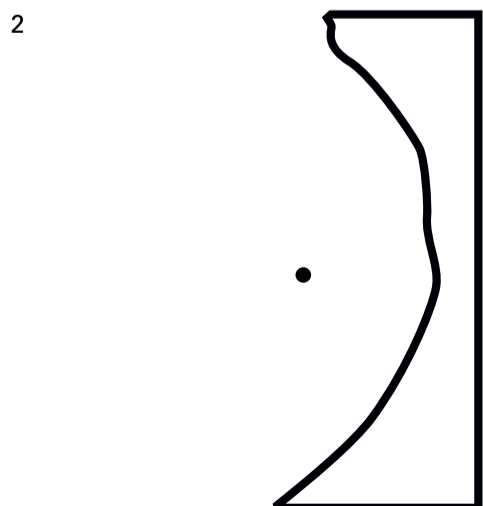
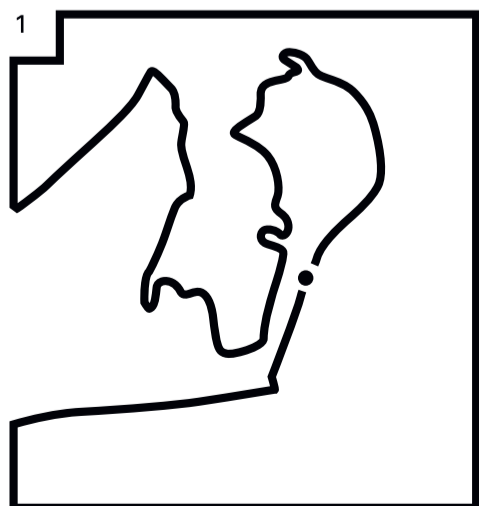
The microphone is operated as a collaboration between three separate organisations: the Cumbria Wildlife Trust's South Walney Nature Reserve; the local sound art organisation, Full of Noises; and the London based artist cooperative, Soundcamp.

The open microphone provides a permanent remote 'pair of ears' for people who are not able to visit the reserve. It is a resource for visiting sound artists taking part in an annual residency program and the Full of Noises festival; and it is part of a network of open microphones in Europe and Japan for the Creative Europe project Acoustic Commons.

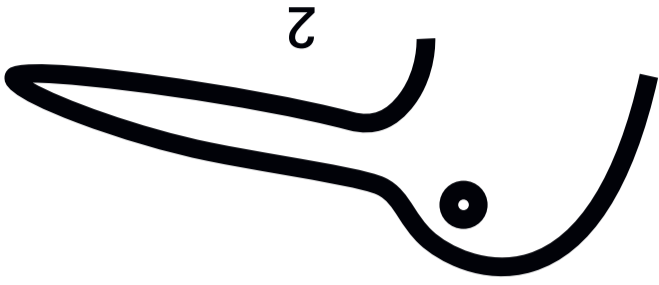
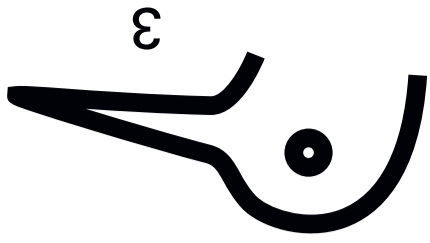
The other Acoustic Commons partners are: Locus Sonus (Marseille), CONA (Ljubljana), Hellenic Mediterranean University (Crete), Cyberforest (Tokyo).

For details:

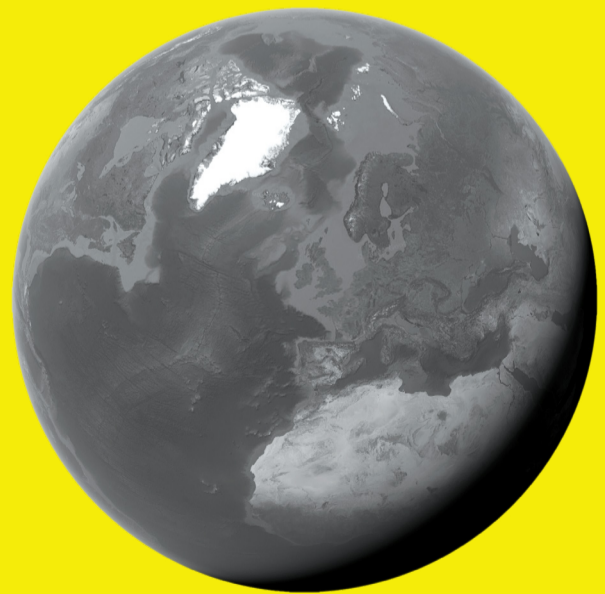
• [acousticcommons.net](https://acousticcommons.net)



1 Curlew  
2 Oystercatcher  
3 Redshank



54.050444°  
-3.172333°



Oystercatchers *H. ostralegus*

Very noisy, also at night. High, persistent alarm: 'kubeeek, kubeeek..' and 'pik, pik..' Groups perform castanet-like clapping and drawn-out trills.

Herring gulls *Larus argentatus*  
Lesser black-backed gulls *L. fuscus*

Voice powerful and far-reaching. Like laughter, yet solemn. From the ground nearby – or above, on the wing.

Redshanks *Tringa totanus*

Alarm: persistent strident 'klü-klü-klü'.  
Two syllable 'teu-hu', sometimes 'teu-hu-hu'. Rising and falling display flight, uttering slow 'tyoo, tyoo, tyoo...'

Grey seals *Halichoerus grypus*

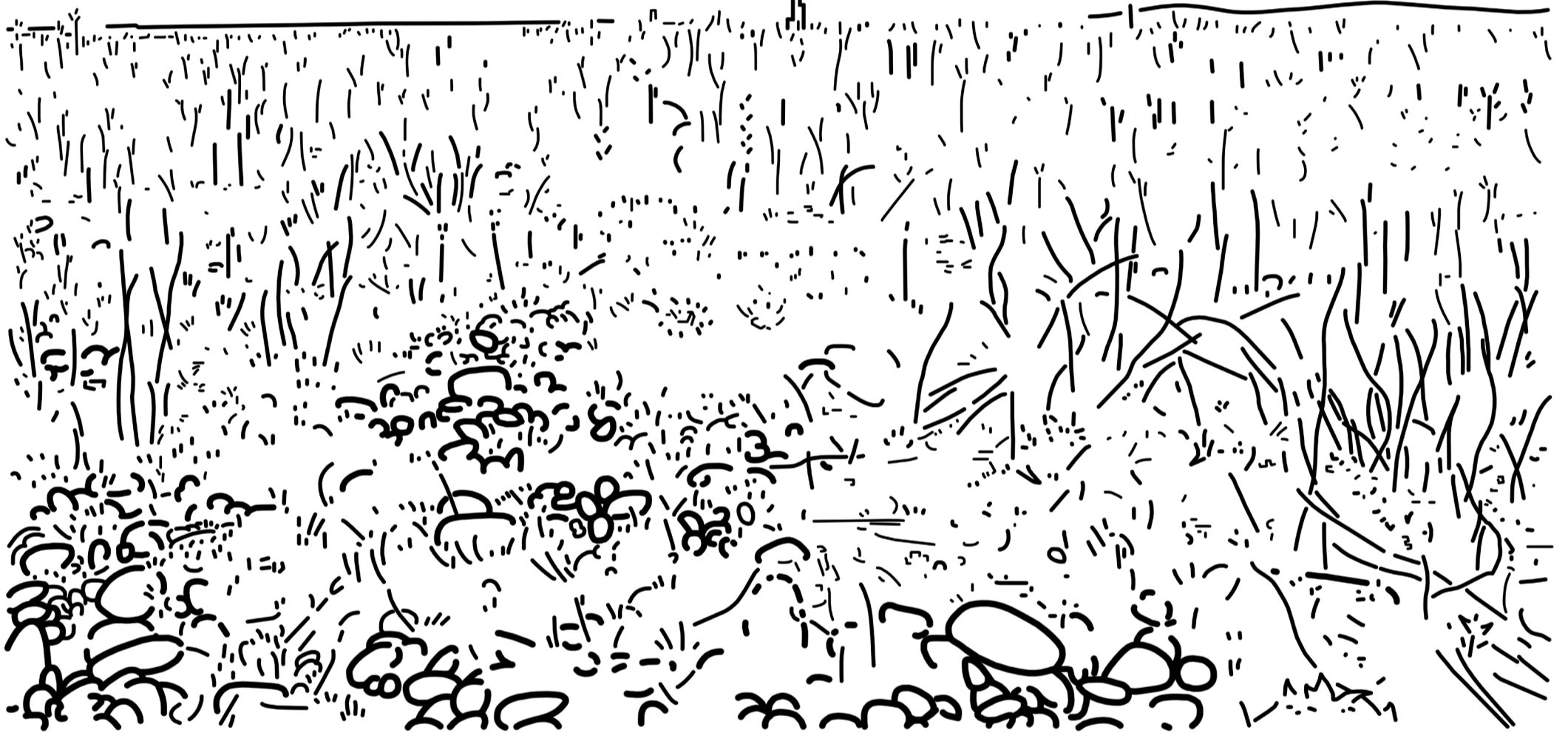
Plaintive drawn-out calls from near the water-line, heard especially at high tide. Singing, moaning, grumbling, sighs.

Bees, flies

Buzz, whirr, whine, of insect wingbeats – 125 (carder bee) to 1046 per second (midge). Left to right, near to far with Doppler shifts.

Shipping

Low, (sub) bass: modulating deep churn / drone – wind farm catamaran, nuclear waste. Mid pitch: fishing boats, smaller craft. High: jet skis.



Curlews *Numenius arquata*

Two notes – clear, far-reaching and wild in character. A quick, liquid bubbling call.

Eiders *Somateria mollissima*

Far-carrying and crooning 'ah-haoo.'  
Low chuckling 'kok-ok-ok.'

References

- WH Hudson: *British Birds*
- EM Nicholson and L Koch: *Songs of Wild Birds*
- Lars Jonsson: *Birds of Europe*

Listen:

- [acousticcommons.net/streams/south\\_walney.html](http://acousticcommons.net/streams/south_walney.html)
- [locusonus.org/soundmap](http://locusonus.org/soundmap)

