



Gordon Hempton
The Sound Tracker

Gordon Hempton is an Emmy Award-winning acoustic ecologist who has circled the globe more than three times in search of the planet's last quiet places and nature's music. No less than avant-garde composer and music legend John Cage has remarked that Hempton's recordings of nature are actually musical. "Instead of using instruments," Cage says, "they are the open ears to the sounds of the environment."

Beyond pure sound, Hempton's work focuses on a true call to arms for all of us. According to Hempton, the extinction rate for quiet places vastly exceeds the rate of species extinction. In his recent book, *One Square Inch of Silence: One Man's Search for Natural Silence in a Noisy World*, his ear-opening journey into Earth's vanishing sanctuaries raises the critical question, "Why isn't natural quiet part of the ecological agenda?"

His sound safari has captured birdsong, melting ice, and bugling elk among hundreds of sounds that forces us to confront the reality that our lives are filled with noise that drown out the sound. If we turn a deaf ear to the loss of natural quiet, we cannot expect to fare better with more complex environmental issues.

Before you believe Hempton's presentations are continuous silence, they are remarkable sessions of teaching us to learn how to listen and grapple with the omnipresent manmade noise. According to *The Smithsonian*, Hempton "meticulously scouts out sites for soundscapes and is totally in touch with his environment as a listener committed to bringing what he hears to a wider audience."

For more than 25 years, he has provided professional audio services to musicians, galleries, museums, and media producers, including Microsoft, Smithsonian, National Geographic, Discovery, National Public Radio, and numerous other businesses and organizations. He has received recognition from the Charles A. Lindbergh Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Rolex Awards for Enterprise.

He studied botany and plant pathology at the University of Wisconsin. His sound portraits, which record quickly vanishing natural soundscapes, have been featured in *People* and *Newsweek* magazines and a national PBS television documentary, *Vanishing Dawn Chorus*, which earned him an Emmy for Outstanding Individual Achievement. Hempton serves as Director of One Square Inch of Silence Foundation and lives in Joyce Washington.

Hempton's landmark *One Square Inch of Silence* has already been reviewed as "one of the most impassioned and original environmentalist works ever written." If you are fortunate enough to listen to Hempton listening to nature, you can never turn a deaf ear to one of our much-overlooked human senses.