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PRESS RELEASE

Birdsong as Acoustic Ink

Nature lovers can make their own artistic contribution to the citizen science and arts project DAWN CHORUS

On 1 May the citizen science and art project DAWN CHORUS began to collect audio recordings of early morning birdsong from all over the world. Anyone can easily use the new smart phone app to take part by recording birdsong right at their own doorstep, and thus combine an enjoyment of nature with the protection of species. All the recordings are stored in a scientific database for the purposes of biodiversity research. Participants can also add an artistic dimension to their own audio contributions by using the newly developed media art feature *Sonic Feather* in the DAWN CHORUS app, turning citizen scientists into citizen artists.

Many artists have taken an interest in the sounds of landscapes and the songs and voices of animals. The multimedia artists Mika Johnson and Marcel Karnapke developed the *Sonic Feather* media art feature for the DAWN CHORUS project. This not only transforms the sounds of nature into visual art, but also adds the innovative function of allowing users to create their own illustrations of the birdsong they record, drawing with “acoustic ink” and thus making their own exclusive and original works of media art. By sharing experiences of nature in both acoustic and visual form via the app in a global sound map, the DAWN CHORUS project combines science, art and social participation. The aim is to raise awareness of the biodiversity of our immediate ecosystems and to sharpen our sensitivity for the endangered richness of the natural world as a source of artistic inspiration.

From Birdsong to Art: Creating Your Own “Sound Picture” with the DAWN CHORUS App

This is how it works. Anyone who wishes to take part can use the DAWN CHORUS app to record morning birdsong, can then add further information for scientific uses, and ideally also upload a photograph of the place where the birdsong was recorded. In the next step, users can create their own “sonic feather.” When playing the recorded birdsong back to themselves, users can touch the display showing the uploaded photograph of the recording location to create striking graphic traces that are directly generated by the sound and frequency patterns of the recordings. This leads to a kind of visual animation of the birdsong, whereby every transformation of the audio track into an illustration is unique – just like the birdsong itself. Here birdsong becomes art. Users can then share their own individual *Sonic Feather* together with the birdsong audio recording in the global DAWN CHORUS sound map and in social media. In this way, citizen scientists and citizen artists create their own active DAWN CHORUS community.

Mika Johnson, multimedia artist and co-creator of the app on the idea behind *Sonic Feather*:

“Every *Sonic Feather* will be as unique as a person’s fingerprint, just as every feather on this planet is unique. In this case, it makes us aware that sound is never just sound, but also creation. When participants share their creations online, they become part of a bigger story about how science and art combined with technology can reshape the world. This is about inspiration and awareness, about creation, and about science and art joining forces to celebrate the mystery and the beauty that birds and their songs give us.”

Very High Participation in the Citizen Science and Arts Project

The citizen science and art project DAWN CHORUS – initiated by BIOTOPIA – Naturkundemuseum Bayern and Stiftung Kunst und Natur (formerly Stiftung Nantesbuch) – was first conducted during the first Corona lockdown in 2020, and takes place for the second time this May. The project aims to promote people’s access to their own natural environments all around the world, to reinforce awareness of the dangers to biodiversity, and also to facilitate scientific and artistic contributions by individual participants. In order to continue to gain comparative data for biodiversity research the project will be repeated yearly.

During the first phase of the project in 2020 DAWN CHORUS achieved more than 4,000 birdsong uploads from fifty different countries, and the project now has more than 85,000 followers on social media. During the current collection phase since 1 May 2021 more than 1,100 new recordings from around the world have been added, and interest is increasing by the day.

Börries von Notz, managing director of Stiftung Kunst und Natur, a cooperation partner of the DAWN CHORUS project, says:

“The dawn chorus is a special opportunity for everyone to become more aware of their own natural surroundings – right in front of their doorstep. This gains in value when we share this experience with other people on the internet platform or by social media. With *Sonic Feather* in the new app participants who get up early to hear the dawn chorus can now add their own artistic expression to their contribution, by creatively transforming their experience of nature and sound. Then sound becomes art! We find this really exciting. We are looking forward to many fascinating contributions from the acoustic feathers of the citizen scientists and artists of the DAWN CHORUS project.”

DAWN CHORUS – THE SONIC FEATHER ARTISTS:

Multimedia artist **Mika Johnson** (born 1975 in San Diego/USA) works in the design of XR experiences and also in various media, including as a director for fictitious and documentary projects. He explores dream-like narratives, myths, rituals and biological diversity in the broadest sense. He worked for example with the Goethe-Institut in New Delhi to establish a virtual library connecting global knowledge systems, and for the Lost Forms and Found Forms project (produced by Expanded Focus Leipzig), which enables users to interact with an iceberg and to immerse themselves in the complex relations between fungi, trees and plants.

Berliner artist **Marcel Karnapke** (born 1983) is a theatre director, a developer, and a teacher. He is co-founder of the artists’ collective CyberRäuber, which creates new formats and applications for mixed realities in the context of classical theatre, opera and ballet. The main focus of his work is on merging high technologies with architectures of the human narrative. His work has received numerous prizes and encompasses themes such as virtual reality, the artificial intelligence of future architecture, archaeology, and the construction of realities.

DAWN CHORUS

The Invitation

From **1 to 31 May 2021** the DAWN CHORUS project is for the second time inviting people to:

Get up very early and record the dawn chorus of birdsong at your own doorstep, between dawn and sunrise, using the free new DAWN CHORUS app. Use the *Sonic Feather* app feature to create your own media artwork from your recording. Upload your contribution to the global sound map and share your experience with people from all over the world at www.dawn-chorus.org.

The DAWN CHORUS app including the art feature *Sonic Feather* is available free of charge for iOS and Android:

Google Play Store:

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.natural_apptitude.dawnchorus

App Store:

<https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/dawn-chorus/id1557441003#?platform=iphone>

The DAWN CHORUS birdsong recordings are available at **#dawnchorus2021** and **#stopandlisten** on

Facebook [@DawnChorusStopAndListen](https://www.facebook.com/DawnChorusStopAndListen)

Instagram [@dawnchorus_stopandlisten](http://www.instagram.com/dawnchorus_stopandlisten)

and at www.dawn-chorus.org.

PRESS PICTURE MATERIAL can be downloaded here:

<https://dawn-chorus.org/presse/>

Online Event Accompanying DAWN CHORUS:

On Monday 31 May at 7 pm the DAWN CHORUS project will feature the BIOTOPIA online event *THE SOUNDS OF EXTINCTION: An Evening with Leah Barclay, Dan Stowell and David Rothenberg*. These three renowned international experts for bio-acoustics and natural soundscapes will discuss questions such as what sound can tell us about the precarious condition of our ecosystems, and what we can learn when we listen to the sounds of nature.

This panel discussion will be moderated by BIOTOPIA founding director Prof. Dr. Michael John Gorman and introduced by Dr. Auguste von Bavaria.

Registration and further information:

<https://www.biotopia.net/de/events/46-2021-ueber-leben-sound-of-extinction?date=2021-05-31-19-00>

“Dawn Chorus – the App” is developed as part of the “dive in. Programme for Digital Interactions” of the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation) with funding by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BMK) in the NEUSTART KULTUR programme.

DAWN CHORUS is a collaborative project of BIOTOPIA – Naturkundemuseum Bayern and Stiftung Kunst und Natur / Foundation Arts and Nature, as well as Förderkreis BIOTOPIA – Naturkundemuseum Bayern e.V.

DAWN CHORUS – PROJECT PARTNERS:

Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst (Bavarian State Ministry for Science and Art)

Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Umwelt und Verbraucherschutz (Bavarian State Ministry of the Environment and Consumer Protection)

Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Unterricht und Kultus (Bavarian State Ministry for Education and Culture)

Bayerische Akademie für Naturschutz und Landschaftspflege (Bavarian Academy for Nature Conservation and Landscape Management)

Bayern 2 (Bavarian Broadcast 2)

BirdLife International

BUND Naturschutz in Bayern e.V. (Bavarian Society for the Protection of Birds e.V.)

Haus der Kunst Munich

Landesbund für Vogelschutz in Bayern e.V. (Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union of Germany e.V.)

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Lehrstuhl für Didaktik der Biologie (LMU Munich, Institute for Biology Education)

Max-Planck-Gesellschaft (Max-Planck-Society)

Max-Planck-Institut für Ornithologie (Max-Planck-Institute for Ornithology)

Museum for the United Nations – UN Live

NABU – Nature And Biodiversity Conservation Union Germany

#NatureForAll / IUCN International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources

Staatliche Naturwissenschaftliche Sammlungen Bayerns (The Bavarian Natural History Collections) Soundtent

UN-Dekade Biologische Vielfalt (UN Decade on Biodiversity)

Universität Salzburg, Didaktik der Biologie (University of Salzburg, Institute for Biology Education)

VBio

World Migratory Bird Day

WWF

Advisors:

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Dr. Robert Lachlan, Royal Holloway University of London

Prof. Michael Scherer-Lorenzen, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg (University of Freiburg)

DAWN CHORUS – THE INITIATORS:

BIOTOPIA – Naturkundemuseum Bayern is presently planned as a new museum for the natural and environmental sciences in Munich Nymphenburg. It will redefine the concept of a museum of natural history for the "age of biology," expanding and replacing the present Museum of Man and Nature. As an interface between science, art and society, BIOTOPIA will present interactive exhibitions, events, festivals, digital education and mobile programmes across Bavaria as a new platform for discussion and education in the life sciences and sustainability. BIOTOPIA is an international lighthouse project of the Free State of Bavaria with private support from the Förderkreis BIOTOPIA – Naturkundemuseum Bayern e.V., chaired by Dr. Auguste Princess of Bavaria. More information: www.biotopeia.net

Stiftung Kunst und Natur (formerly Stiftung Nantesbuch) provides spaces and interdisciplinary programmes for the sensory exploration of art and culture and of nature and landscape. It aims to inspire and activate people. This cultural institution was founded in 2012 by the entrepreneur Susanne Klatten and operates in two locations. In Nantesbuch in the foothills of the Bavarian

Alps the foundation is developing a large natural site with comprehensive renaturation, landscape management, and forest transformation projects, as well as farming and forestry, presenting a diverse programme of cultural events and education on art and nature. In Bad Homburg in the state of Hesse, the Museum Sinclair-Haus offers a venue for exhibiting contemporary international art. More information: www.kunst-und-natur.de

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