

Consider this a public service announcement. Noise pollution, or more scientifically known as anthropogenic noise, is something climbers need to consider.

This was largely unknown to me in my beginner days of adventuring. I was highlining at Taft Point in Yosemite and our group of friends were itching to blast our speaker, partially in hopes to ease some of our fears of being that high off the ground. My partner (thankfully) was pretty adamant about NOT doing that. I came to understand that by not playing sick beats, we are honoring those who have traveled perhaps THOUSANDS OF MILES to experience that moment.

If I'm being honest, I wasn't expecting to find all that much more on the topic, but I'm happy to be proved wrong. Here are a few extra points to consider...

1. Noise can disturb wildlife

Okay, so this is fascinating: anthropogenic noise is considered a major global pollutant. It's effects are seen not only on humans by increasing stress and contributing to poor concentration, but on most species of animals in a variety of ecosystems. For example, noise pollution [affects the hunting efficiency of bats](#), increasing the time and energy put forth to finding food sources. Other species rely on sound for mating signals, warning signals, and even finding their home.

2. Noise pollution can make it difficult for climbing partners to communicate

A lot of factors can increase the difficulty of communication— wind, the distance between partners, topography. Throw your buddy's speaker on top of that and you may have a real problem. A general rule of thumb is to keep all noise to a minimum. (This includes any communications you have back and forth with your climbing partner.) Walkies are your friend! And also 100% worth the investment!

3. Quite simply, not everyone may like your music choices

A fellow climbing mentor recently asked me, "If you could cure COVID-19 by eliminating one genre of music, what would it be? And why would you choose country?" By no means am I defending country music, buuuut, your jam may be someone else's moldy jar of Smuckers. And perhaps to that person, your music is the one thing that's keeping them from sending their project.

4. Drones are noise, too. As is bolting.

A lot of what I discussed above refers to music, but that's not the only way we contribute to noise pollution in the outdoors. Drones have been banned in National Parks since 2014, for reasons stated above, but also the admirable philosophical argument that if one is in nature, one should be focusing on nature. Bolts, and the noise pollution caused by drilling into rock, is another potential issue. According to [Access Fund's Climbing Management Guide](#), responses to noise pollution caused by bolting have increased limitations on using power tools. One caveat here is... using a power drill (although louder than a hand drill) will cause 30-60 seconds of noise, while the noise of a hand drill could last up to a half hour.

5. Unsolicited beta

A sensitive subject, perhaps. The anthropogenic noise of unsolicited beta is not welcome! (Unless it's a dangerous matter)

6. The Tennis Grunt (or my version, The Climbing Shriek)

I've been giving this some thought lately... There's one particular famous climber — ahem, Adam Ondra— who is known for using his voice. So, of course, I did what anyone would do, and Googled 'Adam Ondra noise pollution.' (Unfortunately, he sent a route called White Noise, which really f*cks with my search results. But

maybe that's just good PR.) This quest ultimately led me to an article by Outdoor Research, [Does yelling make you climb harder?](#) There is some science to suggest yes. Shouting is an effective tool of encouraging breath, while also tightening your core. Where I also stand on the subject is: read the room, people. And don't be this jerk.



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