Students Capture Sense of Place Through Audio

For the complete audio with media resources, visit: http://www.nationalgeographic.org/media/recording-soundscapes-zip-code-48160/

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Above: Milan, a rural town in southeastern Michigan, is a small community that was home to a Visteon auto-parts factory. The rural complexion of the area is changing, as many of the large farms are divided into housing projects, but residents have managed to preserve the tight-knit community.

When you are asked to describe where you live, what do you say? Do you describe homes, shops, and businesses? Do you describe the people who live or work there? Maybe you describe landscape. All of these things help to define your sense of place, or what makes a certain place have its own distinctive character. One distinctive characteristic that helps to create a sense of place is sound. Every place has sounds that you might not notice, but those sounds help create a sense of place.

The students whose voices you’ll hear in these audio recordings collected sounds that defined their zip code's sense of place. Because sounds within a particular zip code change as its community does, these recordings serve as an acoustic archive of that place. These audio time capsules have also been...
preserved in the Library of Congress for future generations to experience.

For each zip code in NatGeo Education’s sense of place collection, you'll find three types of sounds:

- **Most Distinctive:** This is the sound that best represents a place. For example, at the beach this might be the sound of waves crashing.
- **Humans and Environment Interacting:** These sounds demonstrate how people who live in that place interact with it. In the beach example, this might be the sound of kids shouting as the waves lap at their feet, or the sound of a motorboat zipping through the water.
- **Symbolic of Change:** These sounds give clues about how a place is changing. In the beach example, the sound of heavy construction behind the dunes might indicate the development of new hotels or shopping centers.

### Fast Facts

- The Milan Dragway participates in Jr. Dragsters, a drag-racing league that offers kids ages 8-17 a chance to race half-scale dragsters.

- Milan was named by Italian immigrants in honor of their hometown of Milan, Italy.

- Milan's history in American automotive manufacturing stretches as far back as Henry Ford himself, who established a coil-manufacturing plant there in 1935.