

SOUNDWORK

Streamwalkers

JENNI SCHINE

The soundwork file is openly available online on the UBC Library Open Journal Systems website: <https://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/bcstudies/>

Streamwalkers is a soundscape composition audio recorded in Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw territory (the Broughton Archipelago), British Columbia. The piece sonically follows salmon scientists and stream walkers Marie-Josée Gagnon, Alyssa Ball, and Chris Guincharde as they count and identify spawning Pacific salmon in the many rivers, streams, and tributaries that lead into the ocean. Using soundwalks, active-listening, field recordings, and interviews, *Streamwalkers* is the first in a series of audio works that highlights discoveries, conversations, and collaborations with scientists, local knowledge holders, animals, and the land itself.

This composition is part of a larger project, *Field Guides for Listeners*, a multi-disciplinary project collaboration between myself (Jenni Schine) and visual artist Jay White. Since 2017, Jay and I have taken part in a series of art residencies at the remote Salmon Coast Field Station to create a podcast, graphic novel, and installation about salmon health, salmon aquaculture, and the science that takes place far from the eyes (and ears) of most Canadians. It is a guide for listeners as it helps to identify salmon culture in its natural and unnatural environments and asks: How can we respectfully listen to scientific and land-based knowledge; and how can we make art that is accountable to the people and the land that teaches us?

Salmon make tangible the issues of climate change, industrial extraction, and the continued effects of our colonial legacy. Jay and I proposed this project because we want to call public attention to the plight of wild salmon, a keystone species: their disappearance would drastically alter coastal ecosystems. Wild salmon feed humans, whales, bears, eagles, and otters, and they fertilize forests for hundreds of miles inland. They are integral to Indigenous cultures and to the prosperity and health of all BC citizens. Our connection with salmon is raw and real; unfortunately, many policy

makers are not rigorously assessing wild salmon health or the effects of open-net aquaculture and logging on wild salmon.

Over the course of two field seasons at the station, we, as artists, surveyed, documented, and listened to one life cycle of salmon, from spawning to migration. *Streamwalkers* was created after our fieldwork in the fall of 2017, and, over the month of May 2018, we were lucky enough to join the Salmon Coast crew as they counted and identified sea lice on baby Pacific salmon throughout the area. The Broughton Archipelago has the highest density of open-net salmon farms in British Columbia, which are linked to viral disease risks and the decline of the wild Pacific salmon. For nearly eighteen years, Salmon Coast has been monitoring the relationship between sea lice, wild juvenile salmon, and open-net salmon farms. And for thirty years, many First Nations in the area have stood in opposition to fish farms in their territories.

The art residencies at Salmon Coast have been particularly important to me. As a community-engaged researcher and artist, I am in this for the long haul. Year after year, I've heard from young scientists that their work goes beyond "scientific research" – their hearts and minds have become connected to the place, and the people and animals who live there. I feel that this connection is how we create change. Both art and science research practices have the capacity to "go beyond the data," tell a story, and open ears, minds, and hearts. And by exploring different perspectives and stories of salmon, we've hopefully not only amplified the salmon science, but mobilized specific opportunities for action and agency.

A huge thanks to the Salmon Coast Field Station, the Mainland Enhancement of Salmonid Species Society, the Sointula Art Shed, and the Canada Council for the Arts for all the support. And a heart-filled thanks to all the scientists who took the time to talk with us about their salmon research. Thank you!

Field Guides for Listeners exhibition will run at Open Space Gallery in Victoria, BC, this April to May 2019: www.fieldguidesforlisteners.ca.

Learn More:

Salmon Coast Field Station: www.salmoncoast.org

Raincoast Research: www.raincoastresearch.org

Watershed Watch: <https://www.watershed-watch.org/campaigns/aquaculture/>