
RECORDING ANIMAL CALLS FOR TEACHING AIDS¹

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For some years I have been interested in an analysis of the breeding calls and protesting notes of various Oklahoma frogs and toads. For the past two seasons, I have utilized a recording device in this work in order to bring the calls into the laboratory for study.²

Last year, I found the recordings of interest to students in a class in herpetology. By playing them, calls of species not available during field experience of the class could be heard, as it were, second-hand. Students in a class in animal behavior were also much interested in the records secured.

There is no end to the uses of such recordings at appropriate places in the study of animals. Bird songs, insect sounds, the voices of farm animals, etc. are as easy to get as are those of frogs and toads (in many cases easier); and all of these are utilizable in teaching certain phases of biological subjects. The recordings can also be used in conjunction with the study of movies showing animals and their habits, e. g., a recording of the alarm calls of a pair of song birds might be played in conjunction with a moving picture of their reactions as their nests or young are threatened.

The device used in my studies is an electronic business recorder known as the Sound Scriber. The manufacturer produces a portable model powered by an auto battery working through a transformer. Without the transformer, it plugs into any ordinary house current. The records are made at a constant rate on plastic discs and a maximum of fifteen minutes of continuous recording may be secured on each side of each large disc. Smaller discs, recording correspondingly lesser times, are also available. The discs are easily numbered and filed in envelopes available from the company and even may be mailed if desired without harm to them.

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²The machine used was secured for me by the Faculty Research Committee, whose aid is gratefully acknowledged.

In making the recordings, I have often used a hundred-foot extension. By this means, the microphone may be placed a hundred feet from the power source. Control is possible either from the microphone or from the recorder itself. This makes it possible to hang the microphone in a tree or to place it elsewhere near animals whose sounds one desires to record and get the sounds of undisturbed individuals by control from the machine itself. Most of my records have been made by utilizing the battery of the automobile which I was using. Some, however, have been secured by use of a separate auto battery carried to places where a car cannot go.
