

Have you heard 'the hum'? Mystery of Earth's low droning noise could now be solved

It was often blamed on phone masts, submarine communications and pipes

By Lamiat Sabin, 16 April 2015

Independent.co.uk



Scientists have confirmed the cause of a strange humming noise that emanates from the Earth and has baffled people for more than forty years – and was even a factor in one reported suicide.

The noise has been talked about worldwide and also made local newspaper headlines in the UK. It is often referred to as a “phenomenon” and “the hum”, usually prefixed with the location of where it is heard.

In Britain, the most famous example was the “Bristol hum” that made the news in the late 1970s. One newspaper asked readers in the city: “Have you heard the Hum?” and at least 800 people said they had – according to the BBC – and some had suffered headaches and nosebleeds from it.

It has been described like “a diesel car idling in the distance” by a BBC interviewee and the maddening sound has driven people stir-crazy in trying to figure it out. Especially when they can only hear it at home and during the night.

People living on the south coast have complained this week of a constant and low-pitched sound for which they have found no cause – as reported by *Plymouth Herald*.

It has been mistaken for leaking pipes, phone masts, wind farms, low-frequency submarine communications and even mating fish.

“For the first few years I lost sleep, couldn’t concentrate and was unable to do anything. I was constantly in tears, which put a great strain on my husband. It has changed me from an active, creative person to a stifled, angry pessimist,” a woman told *The Independent* back in 1994.

Doctors blamed patients’ abilities to hear it on tinnitus, until Addenbrooke’s Hospital in Cambridge had confirmed sometime in the 1990s that the cause is external.

However, the search for the truth could now be over as researchers claim that microseismic activity from long ocean waves impacting the sea bed is what makes our planet vibrate and produces the droning sound.

The pressure of the waves on the seafloor generates seismic waves that cause the Earth to oscillate, said Fabrice Ardhuin, a senior research scientist at Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in France.

The continuous waves produce sounds lasting from 13 to 300 seconds. They can be heard by a relatively small proportion of people – who are sensitive to the hums – and also by seismic instruments.

“We have made a big step in explaining this mysterious signal and where it is coming from and what is the mechanism,” Ardhuin said of the study published in *Geophysical Research Letters*, a journal of the American Geophysical Union.

Understanding the ringing could also help researchers gain a better knowledge of the Earth’s structure, he added.

Microseismic waves penetrate through the Earth’s mantle so recording these waves could give scientists a much more detailed picture of what lies beneath.

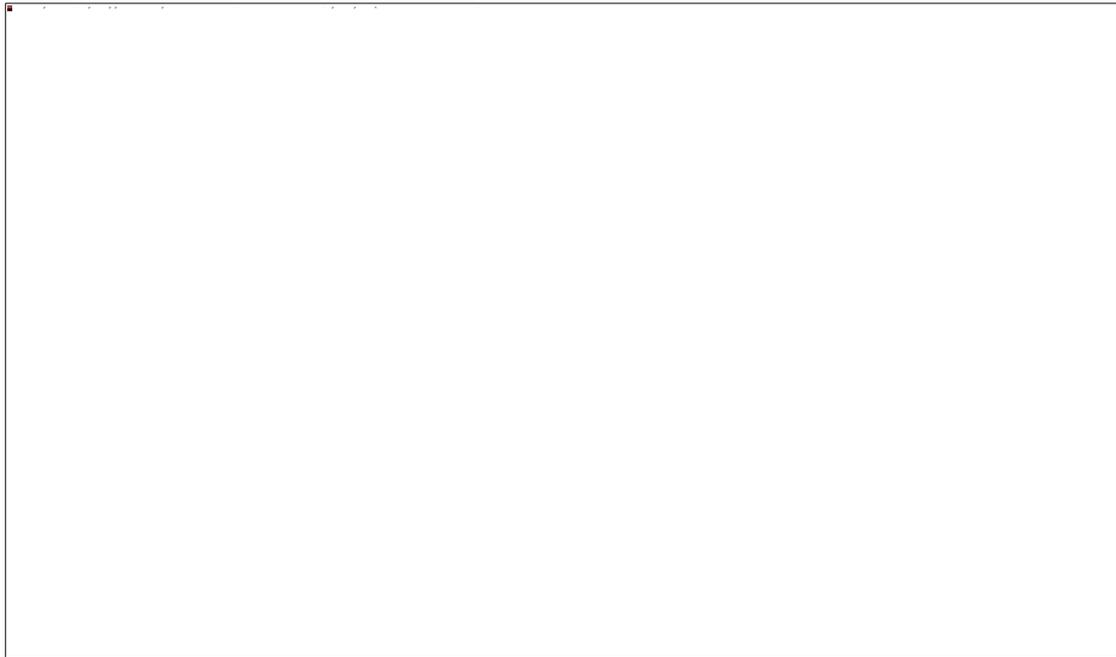
Discovering fainter seismic signals could also allow scientists to better detect small or faraway earthquakes.

Mystery of Earth's 'hum' heard by millions SOLVED by researchers – and it's NOT aliens

IT IS the unexplained buzzing noise that has fed suspicions of an alien invasion or UFO activity in the skies.

By Tom Batchelor, April 17, 2015

Express.co.uk



The mystery of a bizarre drone that has plagued millions of people around the world could finally be solved, scientists believe.

'The Hum' – as it is known – can be heard by some more than others and has been blamed for pushing people to the brink of madness with sleepless nights and a constant ringing in the ears.

Some thought it was the fault of gas pipes or power lines, but experts now believe the elusive buzzing is down to "ocean waves".

Researchers say currents in the sea cause the Earth to vibrate subtly as they shift across its surface, creating "microseismic" activity that elicits a "ring".

The findings mean conspiracy theorists who had blamed submarines or even mating fish were at least looking in the right direction in their search for an answer to the intriguing low-level noise.

According to scientists Fabrice Ardhuin, Lucia Gualtieri and Eleonore Stutzmann, who co-authored the study, “the hum is the least understood part of Earth’s oscillations”.

The trio of French academics published their findings in the journal *Geophysical Research Letters*.

“I think our result is an important step in the transformation of mysterious noise into an understood signal,” Mr Ardhuin said.

The strange noise, which only affects one in 50 people – or two per cent of the world’s population – was first reported in the 1970s.

Just this week, residents in Plymouth, Devon, complained of a “melodic, droning” sound.

One resident told the *Plymouth Herald*: “You wake up and thought it was something in the house. You can’t say it’s loud, but it’s a nuisance.

“We don’t hear it in the daytime, only at night.”

Despite extensive research, scientists had until now failed to come up with a conclusive answer to what caused the hum, with the most commonly cited explanations being farm or factory machinery.