

The wild sounds of a storm among the trees

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In the quiet of a wooded gully, I imagine I can hear the sounds of loud yesterdays. Two trees, not felled but fallen, must have created a steeplechase barrier across the track here, for their upper trunks have been cut into three-metre lengths. In the scatter of sawdust, I imagine the roar and the whine of a chainsaw – the ecstasy in the change of pitch as its blade cut through still-living tissue and through the heart of each trunk. It was the sound that I heard all around in those days after the big blow.

Here too was the thump of long logs, and the “shush” of a needle-bearing crown, as the warden dragged branches to the right of the path and cast pieces of timber away to the left. The debris lies none too tidily on either side now, for he had already many emergencies behind him and three downed sycamores waiting round the bend.

On the afternoon of [Storm Eunice](#) itself, the spruce tree which was only metres from our bedroom window thrashed, hissed, flexed, but still held firm. In this gully, just a mile up the road, dozens of spruces must have been whipped up to make a far greater racket, battered this way and that, clashing branches like antlers.

Above and below the cacophony came the crack of a conifer shearing off at chest height. The split tree toppled over the heaved-up root plate of a companion conifer of similar age that had dropped hours or minutes earlier.

The growth rings from the shattered tree’s trunk tell me that it was just 27 years old. The pale-yellow split weeps the scent of sweet resin. That tree was far enough down the slope of a north-facing rise to be sheltered from the brunt of the gale, with only the crown of its crown shaken by the wind. What weakness caused it to break at the knees?

The day before Eunice, we all knew that it was coming. I walked here in a place where nothing moved. It was a soundless prelude, the unreality of utter calm before the storm.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/mar/09/country-diary-the-wild-sounds-of-a-storm-among-the-trees>