



One of the pioneers of wildlife sound recording, Ludwig Koch developed a keen interest in the field at a young age, when his father returned from a Leipzig fair with Edison's latest invention, the phonograph. With a strong passion for the natural world, Ludwig used the equipment to capture the sounds of wild birds and zoo animals. In 1889, at just 8 years of age, he produced the first documented bird sound recording, capturing the twittering of the Indian shama, a member of the thrush family.

After serving in the First World War, Ludwig worked for Electric and Musical Industries Ltd (EMI), organising a cultural branch within the gramophone industry. Developing the gramophone book he allowed listeners to interpret sounds through text and illustrations, and during his employment published eleven sound-books, with 3 being devoted to animals.

In 1936 his life as a Jew in Nazi Germany became intolerable, so he fled to Britain where English biologist Sir Julian Huxley encouraged him to approach ornithologist and publisher Harry Witherby with his idea for a sound-book on British birds. *Songs of Wild Birds* was published before the end of 1936 and was followed, in quick succession, by two more titles.

Early in the Second World War Koch offered his services to the BBC and throughout the 1940s and 1950s he became a frequent broadcaster, his unmistakable and musical Germanic voice becoming familiar to a whole generation of the British public. His recording of the curlew introduced each edition of *The Naturalist* and in 1948 the BBC purchased his entire collection of animal sounds. He joined their staff and continued to add to the catalogue, undertaking various fieldtrips throughout the British Isles. Ludwig's work laid the foundation of the Natural History Unit's Sound Library and his entire collection is now housed in the National Sound Archive at the British Library.

Having brought the sounds of the countryside into homes of thousands of radio listeners, Ludwig retired from the BBC in 1951. Appointed MBE in 1960, Ludwig continued to make expeditions to record wildlife sounds, completing a trip to Iceland aged 71.

Ludwig Karl Koch died aged 92 on the 4th May 1974.