

Sir David Attenborough

Sir David Attenborough is a natural historian and **broadcaster** who has introduced millions of people to a variety of animals from around the world. David is an important climate change **campaigner** and played a key role in the COP26 climate conference.



His Younger Years and Family Life

David Frederick Attenborough was born on 8th May 1926 in London. He and his two brothers were raised on the **campus** of the University College in Leicester where their father was a university principal and writer.

Did You Know...?

David's brother was Richard Attenborough: an award-winning actor and director.

David became interested in the natural world and animals from a young age. By the age of seven, he had an impressive collection of birds' eggs and fossils. Once he had finished school, David studied natural sciences at the University of Cambridge. However, he was called to serve in the Royal Navy for two years once he had graduated. In 1950, David married Jane Oriel and they had two children together.

His Career

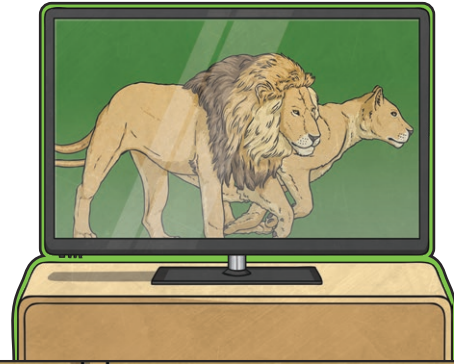
After the war ended, David returned to London and by 1952 he was working as a producer for the BBC, which stands for British Broadcasting Corporation. This was the beginning of an amazing career in television.

In 1954, David began making a successful television series called 'Zoo Quest'. The series filmed animals in the wild, allowing viewers to see them in their natural environment in sometimes far-off and exotic locations.

BBC Two was created in 1965 and David started working as both controller and director of programming. He continued to bring viewers educational programmes about nature and history. However, David resigned from the BBC in 1972 in order to follow his own interests and work independently.

Disclaimer: All facts and statistics correct as of September 2022.

David began to write and produce many TV series on his own. His most successful programme was 'Life on Earth', which first aired in 1976. 'Life on Earth' was a series that explored wildlife in its natural habitat around the world. The show was very popular and up to 500 million people tuned in to watch it.



More recently, David's 'Planet Earth' has become the biggest wildlife documentary ever made and was the first show to air in high definition on the BBC.

Achievements

David has gained many awards throughout his career. In 1985, he received his first knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II and was given the title of Sir David Attenborough.

David has made significant contributions to our understanding of nature and the need to care for it. David is a leading figure in the fight against plastic pollution, **deforestation** and other issues that are having a damaging impact on

Did You Know...?

David has several species of plants, insects and birds named after him, such as the *Nepenthes attenboroughii* – a giant carnivorous plant that devours small animals.

our planet. In 2021, David spoke at the COP26 climate change conference where he urged world leaders to take action against climate change.

Glossary

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| broadcaster: | Someone who appears in radio or television programmes. |
| campaigner: | A person who works to bring about change. |
| campus: | The grounds of a university or college. |
| deforestation: | Clearing large areas of trees, such as those in rainforests. |

Questions

1. What does the BBC stand for? Tick one.

- British Broadcasting Company
- Best Broadcasting Corporation
- British Broadcasting Corporation
- Best Broadcasting Company

2. What is David Attenborough's middle name? Tick one.

- Francis
- Frederick
- Ford
- Frank

3. Who did David Attenborough marry in 1950?

4. Look at the section called **His Career**.

Find and copy a word from the text which means 'tropical and unfamiliar'.

5. Fill in the missing words.

David has several _____ of plants, insects and birds named after him, such as the *Nepenthes attenboroughii* – a giant _____ plant that devours small animals.

6. Explain why you think 'Life on Earth' was such a popular programme.

7. Why do you think that David has several species of plants, insects and birds named after him?

8. Do you think Sir David Attenborough deserved his knighthood? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Answers

1. What does the BBC stand for? Tick one.

- British Broadcasting Company**
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- Francis
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3. Who did David Attenborough marry in 1950?

In 1950, David married Jane Oriel.

4. Look at the section called **His Career**.

Find and copy a word from the text which means 'tropical and unfamiliar'.

exotic

5. Fill in the missing words.

David has several **species** of plants, insects and birds named after him, such as the *Nepenthes attenboroughii* – a giant **carnivorous** plant that devours small animals.

6. Explain why you think 'Life on Earth' was such a popular programme.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think Life on Earth was so popular because it showed animals in their own habitats, which is something that people won't often see unless they watch it on TV.

7. Why do you think that David has several species of plants, insects and birds named after him?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think David has several species named after him because he is a high-profile figure in the field of natural history and it is a good way to pay tribute to him.

8. Do you think Sir David Attenborough deserved his knighthood? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Yes, I think David deserved his knighthood because he has dedicated a lot of his life to producing programmes that have taught people a lot about the natural world as well as his work on climate change.

Sir David Attenborough

Sir David Attenborough is a natural historian and **veteran** broadcaster. As one of Britain's most famous and best-loved TV presenters, he has presented many award-winning documentary series. David is a prominent climate change campaigner; he played a key role in the COP26 climate conference.

Early Life

David Frederick Attenborough was born on 8th May 1926 in Isleworth, West London (the same year as Queen Elizabeth II). He had two brothers and his eldest brother was Richard Attenborough - the Academy Award-winning actor and director. David and his brothers were raised on the campus of the University College in Leicester where their father was a university principal and writer.

David developed a fascination with the natural world at a young age. By the age of seven, he had gathered an impressive collection of birds' eggs and fossils. Once he had finished school, David was awarded a scholarship to study the natural sciences at the University of Cambridge. After graduating in 1947, he served for two years in the Royal Navy as was expected of many men following the Second World War.

In 1950, David married Jane Oriel and the pair had two children together. Around that time, David began a training programme with the BBC before beginning work as a producer for the television station in 1952. This was the beginning of his remarkable career in television.

Broadcasting Career

In 1954, David launched a television series titled 'Zoo Quest', which showed animals both in captivity and the wild.

Did You Know...?

When David started working at the BBC, he had only ever seen one television programme. He didn't even own a TV!

David left the BBC to study **social anthropology** at the London School of Economics. He was then asked to return in 1965 when BBC Two was created. Here, he worked as both controller and director of programming. However, David resigned from the BBC once again in 1972 in order to pursue his own interests and work independently.

David created the programme 'Life on Earth' in 1976. 'Life on Earth' was a series of 96 episodes that explored wildlife and the evolution of nature around the world. At the height of its popularity, around 500 million people tuned in to watch the show.



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Climate Change Campaigning

David is a leading campaigner in the fight against plastic pollution, deforestation and other issues affecting our planet.



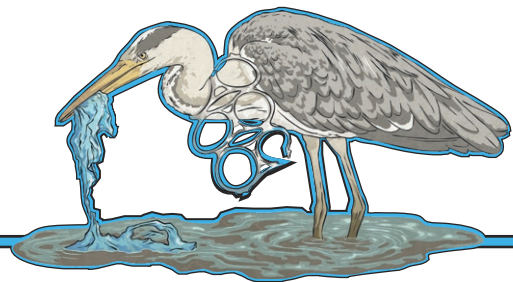
Many of David's programmes, in particular those produced more recently, have focussed on humans' impact on the natural world. He works closely with the charity the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). David was a key speaker at the COP26 climate change conference in 2021, where he urged world leaders to take action against climate change.

Awards and Honours

David has gained many awards throughout his career. He has over 30 **honorary degrees** from British universities and has won several BAFTA and Emmy awards. In 1985, he received his first knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II, which earned him the title of Sir David Attenborough.

What is more, David has several species of plants, insects and birds named after him, such as the *Nepenthes attenboroughii* – a giant carnivorous plant that devours animals, such as rats.

Sir David Attenborough is widely recognised as a national icon. He has made significant contributions to our understanding of nature and the need to care for it and continues to campaign on issues of conservation and climate change.



Glossary

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| honorary degrees: | Honorary titles given to someone without them needing to have the necessary qualifications. |
| social anthropology: | The study of how communities of people live and develop in different parts of the world. |
| veteran: | A person who has had long experience in a particular area. |

Questions

1. How many children did David Attenborough's parents have? Tick one.

- three
- four
- two
- one

2. Which series was created in 1976? Tick one.

- Zoo Quest
- Our Planet
- Life on Earth
- Planet Earth

3. Look at the section called **Awards and Honours**.

Find and copy a phrase that shows that lots of people know who David is.

4. What significant event happened in David's life in 1950?

5. In which year did 'Zoo Quest' first air?

6. What is significant about the year that David was born?

7. Why do you think that David was asked to speak at the COP26 climate change conference?

8. Explain how David's studying of the natural world was interrupted in 1947.

9. **This was the beginning of a remarkable career in television.**

Why do you think that the author used the word 'remarkable' to describe David's television career?

Answers

1. How many children did David Attenborough's parents have? Tick one.

- three**
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Find and copy a phrase that shows that lots of people know who David is.

Accept either: widely recognised; national icon

4. What significant event happened in David's life in 1950?

In 1950, David married Jane Oriel.

5. In which year did 'Zoo Quest' first air?

In 1954, David launched a series titled 'Zoo Quest'.

6. What is significant about the year that David was born?

Pupils' own responses, such as: The year that David was born was significant because it was also the year that Queen Elizabeth II was born.

7. Why do you think that David was asked to speak at the COP26 climate change conference?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that David was asked to speak because he is well-respected and described as widely known in the field of natural history and climate change campaigning. Lots of people will know him and listen to what he has to say.

8. Explain how David's studying of the natural world was interrupted in 1947.

Pupils' own responses, such as: David's studying of the natural world was interrupted because he served for two years in the Royal Navy.

9. **This was the beginning of a remarkable career in television.**

Why do you think that the author used the word 'remarkable' to describe David's television career?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the author used 'remarkable' to describe David's television career because he has achieved a great deal. His programmes have been hugely successful and his career has spanned many decades.

Sir David Attenborough

Sir David Attenborough is a natural historian and veteran broadcaster. As one of Britain's most famous and best-loved TV presenters, he has presented many award-winning documentary series. David is a prominent environmentalist and climate change campaigner, playing a key role in the COP26 climate summit.



Early Life

David Frederick Attenborough was born on 8th May 1926 in Isleworth, West London (the same year as Queen Elizabeth II). He had two brothers, the eldest of whom (Richard Attenborough) became an Academy Award-winning actor and director. David and his brothers were raised on the campus of the University College in Leicester where their father was a university principal and writer.

David developed a fascination with the natural world and animals and, by the age of seven, had gathered an impressive collection of birds' eggs and fossils. Once he had finished school, David was awarded a scholarship to study the natural sciences at the prestigious University of Cambridge. After graduating, however, David was conscripted (enlisted compulsorily) to serve two years of national service in the Royal Navy. He spent two years on a ship in North Wales and did not get to see the world as he had hoped.

In 1950, David married Jane Oriel and the pair had two children together.

After the Second World War ended, David returned to London and started working as an editor for an educational publisher. Shortly after, he began a training programme with the BBC and, in 1952, began working as a producer for the television station. This was the beginning of his remarkable career in television.

Interesting Fact

When David started working at the BBC, he had only ever seen one television programme. He didn't even own a TV!

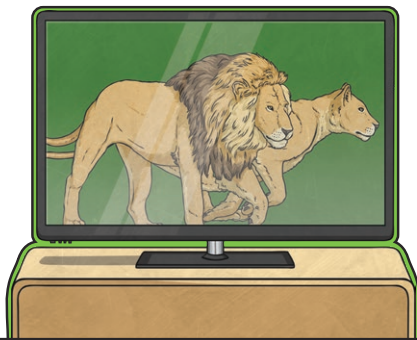
Broadcasting Career

In 1954, David launched a series titled 'Zoo Quest'. The series filmed animals both in captivity and the wild, enabling viewers to see animals in their natural habitat in sometimes far-off and exotic locations.

David left the BBC to study social anthropology (the study of how communities of people live and develop in different parts of the world) at the London School of Economics. In 1965, he was asked to return when BBC Two was created.

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Here, he worked as both controller and director of programming and continued to bring viewers educational and fascinating programmes about nature and history. However, in order to pursue his interests and work independently, David resigned once again from the BBC in 1972.



David began to write and produce TV series independently as a freelancer. The most successful of all his programmes was 'Life on Earth', which first aired in 1976. 'Life on Earth' was a series of 96 episodes that explored wildlife and the evolution of nature around the world. At the height of its popularity, around 500 million people tuned in to watch the show.

More recently, David's 'Planet Earth' has become the biggest wildlife documentary ever made and was the first show to air in HD (high definition) on the BBC.

Climate Change Campaigning

Despite being in his mid-nineties, David is a leading figure in the fight against plastic pollution, deforestation and other issues that are having an irrevocably damaging impact on our planet.

Many of David's programmes, in particular those produced more recently, have focussed on humans' impact on the natural world. He is the UK ambassador for the charity the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and was a key speaker at the COP26 climate change conference in 2021; he urged world leaders to take action in the fight against climate change.

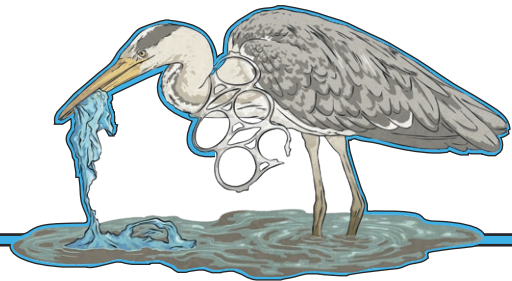
The question is, are we happy to suppose that our grandchildren may never be able to see an elephant except in a picture book?

Sir David Attenborough

Awards and Honours

David has gained many awards throughout his career. He has at least 30 honorary degrees from British universities, has won several BAFTAs and Emmys and, in 1985, he received his first knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II, earning him the title of Sir David Attenborough. Most fittingly of all, perhaps, is that Sir David Attenborough has several species of plants, insects and birds named after him, such as the *Nepenthes attenboroughii* – a giant carnivorous plant that devours animals, such as rats.

Sir David Attenborough is widely recognised as a national icon; he has made significant contributions to our understanding of nature and the need to care for it. David continues to campaign tirelessly on issues around climate change and conservation.



Questions

1. Which career did David's brother, Richard Attenborough, pursue? Tick one.

- historian
- archaeologist
- actor
- scientist

2. When did David first start working for the BBC? Tick one.

- 1947
- 1950
- 1954
- 1952

3. What did Attenborough study at the London School of Economics?

4. Look at the section called **Early Life**.

Find and copy one word which is an antonym of 'disreputable'.

5. Why did David leave the BBC again in 1972?

6. **David began to write and produce TV series' independently as a freelancer.**

Explain what the word 'freelancer' means.

7. Explain what you think Attenborough meant when he said, '**The question is, are we happy to suppose that our grandchildren may never be able to see an elephant except in a picture book?**'

8. Explain how we know that David was well thought of at the BBC.

9. If you were Sir David Attenborough, which of your achievements would you be most proud of and why?

10. Summarise what you have learnt about David Attenborough in 25 words or fewer.

Answers

1. Which career did David's brother, Richard Attenborough, pursue? Tick one.

- historian
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David studied social anthropology at the London School of Economics.

4. Look at the section called **Early Life**.

Find and copy one word which is an antonym of 'disreputable'.

prestigious

5. Why did David leave the BBC again in 1972?

David resigned to follow his dreams into the wild.

6. **David began to write and produce TV series' independently as a freelancer.**

Explain what the word 'freelancer' means.

Pupils' own responses, such as: The word 'freelancer' means someone who works for themselves and not for another person or company, such as the BBC.

7. Explain what you think Attenborough meant when he said, '**The question is, are we happy to suppose that our grandchildren may never be able to see an elephant except in a picture book?**'

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that Attenborough was trying to warn us that if we do not take care of nature and our planet, then one day, children will only be able to see elephants in picture books and not in real life because they will be extinct.

8. Explain how we know that David was well thought of at the BBC.

Pupils' own responses, such as: We know that Attenborough was well thought of at the BBC because when BBC Two started, Attenborough was asked to come back and work as a controller and director of programming.

9. If you were Sir David Attenborough, which of your achievements would you be most proud of and why?

Pupils' own responses, such as: If I were Sir David Attenborough, I would be most proud of the fact that several species of plants, insects and birds have been named after me. This means that my name would live on for generations to come.

10. Summarise what you have learnt about David Attenborough in 25 words or fewer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: David is a respected broadcaster who, through his programmes, has taught people about the wonders of the natural world and the dangers of climate change.