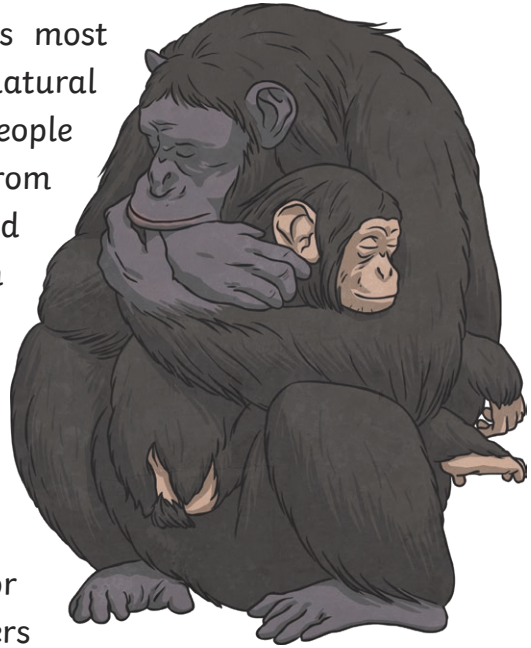


Sir David Attenborough

Sir David Attenborough is one of Britain's most famous and best loved TV presenters. He is a natural historian who has introduced generations of people to a variety of unknown species of animals from around the world. He has a distinctive and widely recognisable narrator's voice which people have come to both imitate and love.

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



Attenborough developed a fascination of the natural world and animals and by the age of seven, had gathered an impressive collection of bird eggs and fossils. Once he had finished school, David was awarded with a scholarship to study the natural sciences at the University of Cambridge. After graduating however, David was conscripted to serve for two years 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, Attenborough married Jane Oriel and they had two children together. Sadly, Jane died in 1997 from a brain haemorrhage.

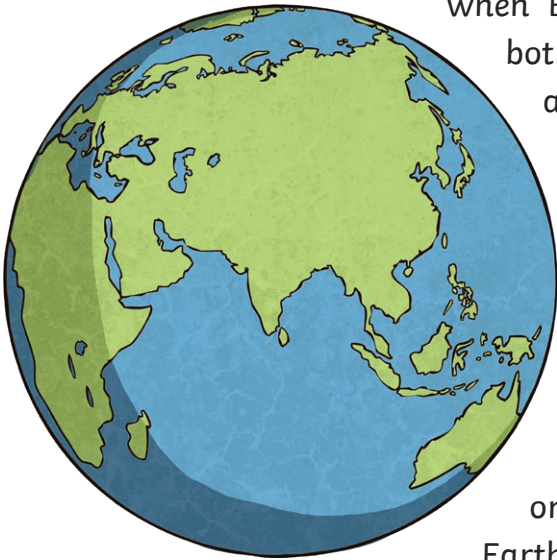
After the war ended, Attenborough returned to London and started working as an editor for an educational publisher. Shortly after, he began a training program with the BBC and in 1952, began working as a producer for the television station. This was the beginning of a remarkable career in television.

Interesting Fact

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

To begin with, however, it was not all plain sailing at the BBC. There were few programmes devoted to the natural sciences and those that involved animals did not film them in their natural environment. This troubled Attenborough and so in 1954, he launched a series titled 'Zoo Quest'. 'Zoo Quest' filmed animals both in captivity and the wild, enabling viewers to see animals in their natural habitat in sometimes far off and exotic locations. The show was incredibly successful.

After leaving the BBC to study social anthropology at the London School of Economics, Attenborough was asked to return in 1965 when BBC Two was created. 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 follow his dreams into the wild, Attenborough resigned from the BBC once again in 1972.



Attenborough began to write and produce TV series' independently as a freelancer. His most successful of all was his program '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, Attenborough'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.

Attenborough has gained many awards throughout his career. He has at least 31 honorary degrees from British universities, has won several BAFTAs and Emmys and in 1985, he received a knighthood from the Queen, earning 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.

Did You Know...?

There is only one animal that Sir David Attenborough does not like... rats!



Sir David Attenborough is truly a great Briton and has made huge and significant contributions to our understanding of nature and the need to care for it. Despite being in his mid-nineties, Attenborough is a leading figure in the fight against plastic pollution, deforestation and other issues that are having an irrevocably damaging impact on our planet.

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



Questions

1. **Find** and **copy** a word which means to **copy**.

2. What career did David's brother, Richard Attenborough, pursue? Tick **one**.

- ☐ Historian
- ☐ Archaeologist
- ☐ Actor
- ☐ Scientist

3. What sad event occurred in Attenborough's life in 1997?

4. When did Attenborough first start working for the BBC? Tick **one**.

- ☐ 1947
- ☐ 1950
- ☐ 1954
- ☐ 1952

5. What difficulties did Attenborough face when he first started working for the BBC?

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

7. Explain how we know that Attenborough was well-thought of at the BBC.

8. Explain what freelance work Attenborough did.

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

10. 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?
