

# Sir David Attenborough

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

## Family Life

David Frederick Attenborough was born in Isleworth, West London on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1926 which is the same year that Queen Elizabeth II was born. He and his two brothers were raised on the campus of University College in Leicester where their father was a university principal and writer.

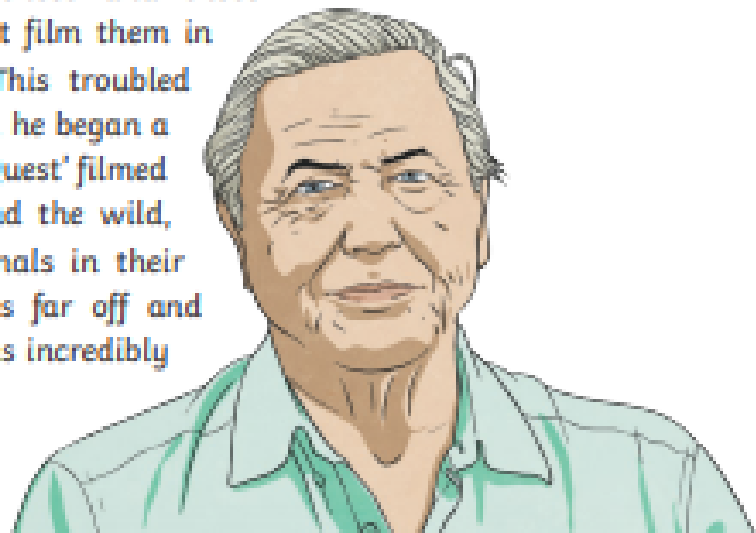
Attenborough developed an interest in the natural world and animals and by the age of seven, had gathered an impressive collection of bird eggs and fossils. When he had finished school, David studied natural sciences at the University of Cambridge. In 1947 however, David was called to serve for two years in the Royal Navy. He spent two years on a ship in North Wales and did not get to explore nature around the world as he had hoped.

In 1950, Attenborough married Jane Oriel and they had two children together.

## Career

After the war ended, Attenborough returned to London and started working 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 an astounding career in television.

Things were not easy to begin with 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 began a series called '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 continue his studies, 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 many TV series independently. His most successful programme was 'Life on Earth' which first aired in 1976. 'Life on Earth' was a series 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. It was the first show to air in high definition on the BBC, providing viewers with a greater sense of colour and reality of the places that he was filming in.

### **Achievements**

Attenborough has gained many awards throughout his career. He has won several BAFTAs and Emmys and, in 1985, he received a knighthood from the Queen, earning the title of Sir David Attenborough. Most important of all perhaps is that Sir David Attenborough has several species of plants, insects and birds named after him.

### **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 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 raising awareness about issues that are destroying our planet such as plastic pollution and deforestation and is teaching the world about the importance of protecting our planet now before it is too late.

# Questions

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

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

- two
- four
- three
- one

3. Explain how Attenborough's studying of the natural world was interrupted in 1947.

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

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5. **Find and copy** a word which means **dedicated**.

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6. In what year did 'Zoo Quest' first air? Tick **one**.

- 1952
- 1954
- 1947
- 1950

7. What was Attenborough's first independent programme?

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8. Explain why 'Planet Earth' was a pioneering documentary.

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9. How is Sir David Attenborough continuing to teach people about the environment in his older years?

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