

Sir David Attenborough

Sir David Attenborough is a wildlife film-maker, presenter and **naturalist**. He has introduced millions of people to a variety of animals from around the world. Sir David is an important climate change **campaigner** and played a key role in the 26th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26).



Early Life

David Frederick Attenborough was born on 8th May 1926 in London. He and his two brothers grew up living in College House at the University of Leicester, where their father was a writer and the head of the university.



From a young age, Sir David enjoyed collecting fossils and birds' eggs.

Once he had finished school, Sir David studied Natural Sciences at the University of Cambridge. He was called to serve for two years in the Royal Navy once he completed university. Sir David married Jane Oriel in 1950 and they had two children together.



Career



Sir David returned to London after the Second World War and started working as a producer for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). This was the beginning of his career in television. In 1954, Sir David created a show called 'Zoo Quest'. It was filmed in many interesting places and showed animals in their natural environment. This was quite unusual at the time and the show was very popular.

Sir David left the BBC in 1973. He started to write and produce his own shows. One of his most successful programmes was 'Life on Earth', which was first shown on TV in 1979. As well as making many other shows throughout his career, he continued to make other 'Life' programmes. Each one focused on a different plant or animal group.

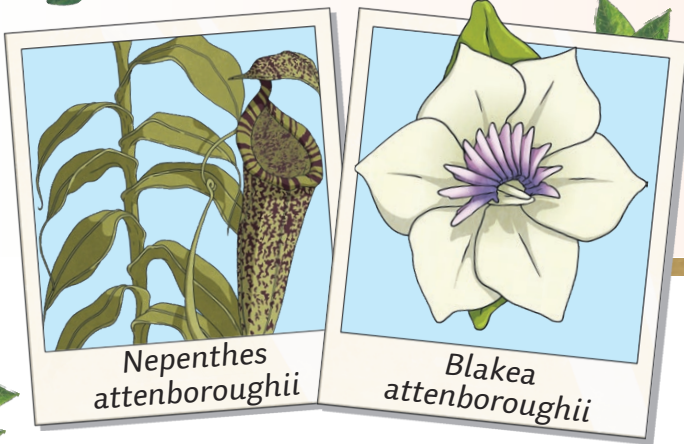


Sir David's 'Planet Earth' was the first show to air in high definition on the BBC. It became one of the most popular wildlife documentary series ever made.



Achievements

Sir David gained many awards throughout his career. In 1985, he received his first knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II for his work in television and broadcasting and was given the title of Sir David Attenborough. He obtained his second knighthood in 2022 for his work in television and conservation.



Many species of plants, animals and fossils have been named after him, such as the *Blakea attenboroughii*, a rare plant found in the cloud forests of Ecuador.

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



Many of Sir David's later programmes aim to help people to better understand the world and the need to care for it. He is a leading figure in the fight against plastic pollution, the protection of rainforests and other issues that damage our planet and impact the animals we share it with.

Glossary

naturalist:	A person who studies animals, plants and their environments.
campaigner:	A person who works to bring about change.

Disclaimer: We recommend that you review this resource and the accompanying content carefully before sharing it with learners. Some topics and imagery may be sensitive, controversial or upsetting, and we advise you to be mindful of your learners' individual needs and to provide appropriate support as needed. If learners conduct further research, we recommend guiding them to specific, age-appropriate resources to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

Questions

1. Which jobs did Sir David Attenborough's father have? Tick **two**.

- actor
- writer
- head of university
- Broadcaster

2. Find and copy a word in the **Achievements** section that means the same as 'received'.

3. Number the events from 1-5 to show the order in which they happened. The first one has been done for you.

- 'Life on Earth' was first shown on TV.
- 1 David Attenborough was born in London.
- Sir David received a knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II.
- He created a show called 'Zoo Quest'.
- Sir David left the BBC.

4. Find and copy **one phrase** from the last paragraph that shows Sir David is very well known and respected.

5. Why do you think that Sir David spoke at the COP26 climate change conference?

6. In the **Achievements** section, which word is closest in meaning to 'urged'? Tick **one**.

- helped
- told off
- pressed
- whispered

7. Many of Sir David's later programmes talked about the damage that humans are doing to the planet. Why do you think he chose to talk about these things in his programmes?

8. Summarise the impact of Sir David's career on people and the planet using 20 words or fewer.

Dig Deeper

Discuss with a partner: What other title would fit the text? Why?

Answers

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leading figure

5. Why do you think that Sir David spoke at the COP26 climate change conference?

Learners' own responses, such as: Sir David has done great deal of work on the planet, animals and climate change. His programmes cover a lot of climate change issues so he has lots of knowledge to share.

6. In the **Achievements** section, which word is closest in meaning to 'urged'? Tick **one**.

- helped
- told off
- pressed**
- whispered

7. Many of Sir David's later programmes talked about the damage that humans are doing to the planet. Why do you think he chose to talk about these things in his programmes?

Learners' own responses, such as: I think Sir David chooses to talk about these things so that the people watching will pay attention and try to make changes and do things that help our planet, such as recycling.

8. Summarise the impact of Sir David Attenborough's career on people and the planet using 20 words or fewer.

Learners' own responses, such as: Sir David helped people better understand the world and its wildlife and the need to protect them.