

## 'You can hear into the distance'

### Wildlife sound expert on how coronavirus has changed the world

With flights grounded and roads clear, the coronavirus outbreak is the perfect chance for people to listen



For most people in the UK, life under lockdown comes with a long list of disadvantages and a much shorter list of good things. But Chris Watson says he has found one advantage.

During his career the wildlife sound recordist has travelled to some of the world's most remote places and worked on David Attenborough's wildlife documentaries.

Now, like the rest of us, the 66-year-old has to stay at home in Newcastle, but it has not stopped him recording what he describes as “astonishing” sounds in his back garden.

With fewer planes and cars, he says the lockdown is the perfect chance for people to listen more carefully to the world around them and re-engage with nature.

## Enjoy the silence

“Because there is less noise pollution, we're hearing the world like people heard it years ago,” he says.

“You can hear into the distance. Normally a lot of the detail and quiet sounds – and that includes birdsong, of course – gets lost in the traffic noise, particularly in towns.

“Now, we can hear sounds that used to get lost. A few months ago you would not have heard them. Now is the perfect time, because it's spring, so all the birds are singing.

“You only have to take a walk in a park and you can experience the richness of birdsong. You don't have to go to a tropical rainforest – you can just walk slowly and listen.

“It gives you a whole different experience, even in places that you know well.”

## Unique opportunity

“We're all good listeners, it's just that we spend most of our time blocking out the noise of the outside world” he says.

“It's one good thing in this dreadful situation, a chance for people to re-engage with nature. That's good for our well-being.”

As soon as the lockdown ends, he says he would like to go out into the forest in Northumberland to capture the sounds before normal life – and noise – starts again.

“We'll very quickly go back to our noise polluted environment and this moment will be gone,” he says. “It's important to capture it and enjoy that part of it while we can.”

## Reading questions

E2 (Q1-5 page 1 only) and E3 (Q1-10)

Read the text on pages 1-2. All the answers are in the text.

1. What job does Chris Watson do?

\_\_\_\_\_ (E2.7, E2.11, 1 mark)

2. How old is Chris Watson?

\_\_\_\_\_ (E2.7, E2.11, 1 mark)

3. Where is his home?

\_\_\_\_\_ (E2.7, E2.11, 1 mark)

4. Which statement about Chris Watson is true?

He has stopped recording sounds during lockdown.	<input type="checkbox"/>
He has travelled with David Attenborough.	<input type="checkbox"/>
He has visited some very remote places in the world.	<input type="checkbox"/>

(E2.7, E2.8, 1 mark)

5. You may use a dictionary for this question.  
Which word could replace 'remote' in this sentence?

“to some of the world's most **remote** places...”

controlled	<input type="checkbox"/>
isolated	<input type="checkbox"/>
remembered	<input type="checkbox"/>

(E2.10, 1 mark)

## Reading questions

### E3 only

6. The main purpose of the text is:

<b>A</b>	to advise you to stay at home during lockdown	
<b>B</b>	to say how to become a sound recordist	
<b>C</b>	to explain how lockdown gives you a chance to listen carefully	
<b>D</b>	to give directions to the forest in Northumberland	

(E3.10, 1 mark)

7. What can you experience if you walk in the park?

\_\_\_\_\_

(E3.8, E3.9, 1 mark)

8. Where would Chris Watson like to go after lockdown ends?

\_\_\_\_\_

(E3.8, E3.9, 1 mark)

9. You may use a dictionary for this question.

Suggest a word or phrase to replace ‘**environment**’ in this sentence.

“We'll very quickly go back to our noise polluted **environment** ...”

\_\_\_\_\_

(E3.11, 1 mark)

10. Name one feature that is used to organise the text.

\_\_\_\_\_

(E3.12, 1 mark)