



## *The Eco News – June 2020*

### *The latest info on how COVID-19 is affecting the environment*

#### Less air pollution and emissions

Before the coronavirus, air levels were the highest they had been for hundreds of thousands of years, with 330,000 mega tons of CO<sub>2</sub> being pumped into the atmosphere each year. This was having disastrous effects on climate change and a responsibility for more than 5 million deaths worldwide. Although lots of damage has already been done, emissions have been cut by 2600 mega tons, causing the largest ever global fall in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, because of the pandemic. Firstly, because almost all countries borders have been closed, aviation emissions have gone down by 85%. Secondly, due to lockdown, UK surface transport has reduced by 65%, which is great for local wildlife as well as the environment. Some more good news is that China's emissions have been cut by a quarter and India's have fallen for the first time in four decades. However, emissions have only been reduced by 4% so there is still a lot to be done when it comes to stopping air pollution.

<https://twitter.com/i/status/1242851175457751041>

#### Wildlife charities need your help

Coronavirus has also massively affected charities. NGOs (non-government organisations) are finding it very difficult as they have lost lots of their income which would have been normally gained from visitors and events so are relying mainly on online funding. Many people are unable to volunteer, raise money, visit schools or do any of the things they normally do to help charities. According to the Institute of Fundraising, charities have had a 43% increase in demand but 48% decrease in donations. This shows why we need to keep donating online so that they can keep doing the amazing work they do to support people, animals and the environment all around the world.

### Bad news for some endangered species

Since coronavirus, there has been a huge surge in poaching across the world. Africa, India and Cambodia have been particularly hit. Illegal hunters have taken this chance to kill endangered animals such as rhinos, big cats and giant ibises and at least a dozen rhinos have been killed already. The reason for this increase in activity is due to tourists staying away because of lockdown. There are less people to spot and report poaching and conservation organisations and national parks are not getting enough money, usually gained by tourism. Some people in poor countries, without an income from tourism, are also turning to hunting to feed their families. Extinction for many species is now accelerating due to the coronavirus lockdown and it will take the organisations that protect the animals years to recover.



### More waste

To stop the spread of the virus, everybody is using wet wipes now to wipe down shopping and anything else that might be contaminated. But did you know most wet wipes are made of plastic? Wet wipes block up sewers creating fatbergs and break down into microplastic in the sea and enter the food chain. Another thing that many people are buying is hand sanitizer. But did you think that every little bottle is plastic? All hospitals are buying as much PPE as they can, much of which is single use plastic. Plastic gloves are used on one patient then discarded. Face masks and plastic gowns keep having to be changed. All this harms the environment. The pandemic won't last forever but we will be seeing the consequences for years to come. Flytipping has increased too as less people are about and waste disposal places have been closed. In Wales it is estimated that flytipping is up by 88% since the start of lockdown and the situation is the same in England.

### A good year for British wildlife

As you may have noticed, wildlife in Britain has thrived this year. Less traffic means less roadkill and with humans stuck at home, animals have been left undisturbed. The National Trust has reported that many unusual and rare animals have been spotted recently where they would not usually be seen. This includes warblers, cuckoos, badgers, otters, and lots of bird of prey species. In Berkshire they even spotted a rare albino badger in the woods at Cliveden. Nests, in particular nests on beaches, have been left undisturbed too, leading to population increase. But it is not only on land that animals have benefited from the peace and quiet. The reduction in shipping has reduced noise pollution and the whales are loving it. Whales communicate use a wide variety of sound and noise from shipping can disrupt this. To find out more about the wildlife around you, click on the link to go to the Springwatch webpage. There you can see live webcams of baby birds, play quizzes, take part in the OU pollinators survey and much more.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007qgm3>



### Deforestation is on the rise

Deforestation already was a large environmental problem but since Coronavirus has spread across the whole world, rainforest deforestation has increased, according to the WWF. Logging and mining operations have accelerated their destruction of the Amazon rainforest, deforestation was up by 64% in April compared to the same time last year. Many governments and citizens are in lockdown - but the criminals are not, so they are taking advantage of this to increase their activity. Deforestation in the Amazon Rainforest has soared by 55 percent in the first four months of this year compared to the same period last year, according to Brazil's National Institute for Space Research. Organisations protecting the rainforest are really struggling due to lack of money and people. Activists are also fearful

of the imminent fire season – predicted to be even more devastating than last year because of the increasing deforestation. This is impacting the wildlife immensely, destroying the homes of countless species and annihilating an intricate, diverse ecosystem key to the whole planet's survival.



Overall, this year so far has seen a mixed Impact on the environment. It is a great time for our British wildlife and emission have decreased worldwide, but a quieter world has given illegal poachers, loggers and miners an opportunity to maximize destruction. Everyone is focusing on coronavirus and, although we feel it is very important, we must not forget that the planet is key to our future and it needs saving now, not in a few years' time when this pandemic is over. We hope you found this informative,

SHS Eco Council

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P.S Remember to look out for more Eco Council updates and follow us on Instagram at Stroudhigheco

Sources:

The Telegraph

Independent

The Liverpool Echo

BBC

National Geographic

The Guardian

Carbonbrief

WWF

Daily Mail