

PRESS RELEASE

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WATCHING NATURE PROGRAMMES MAKES YOU HAPPIER NEW BBC RESEARCH REVEALS

Global audience mood significantly lifted by viewing landmark natural history hit *Planet Earth II*

BBC Earth, the BBC's global factual brand, has today published findings of an international study titled ***The Real Happiness Project*** showing nature programming's direct impact on the mood and wellbeing of its viewers across six different countries, including Australia.

The research, conducted with Professor Dacher Keltner, an expert in the science of emotion at the University of California, Berkeley, confirms that even short engagement with such shows leads to significant increases in positive emotions including awe, contentedness, joy and amusement. The study also found substantial decreases in emotions such as nervousness, anxiety, fear, stress and tiredness.

The research was commissioned to mark the launch of the BBC's most ambitious landmark nature series for ten years, ***Planet Earth II***, which broadcasts on Nine, with episode four on **Wednesday 15 March at 7.30pm**.

BBC Worldwide's in-house research team collaborated with Professor Keltner, who oversees Psychology at the University of California, Berkeley on a two-phased study. A global quantitative research project of over 7500 nationally representative participants from the US, UK, Singapore, India, South Africa and Australia and a literature review of over 150 scientific studies that have explored the link between a connection with nature and human happiness and wellbeing. To further enrich the study, the research team worked with Crowd Emotion, a pioneering tech start-up that specialises in emotion recognition, using cutting edge facial mapping technology to understand how viewers respond to video footage.

How the study worked:

Participants taking part in the quantitative research, drawn from Lightspeed's global market research panels, were asked to complete a short survey to establish

their mood state before being shown clips from the forthcoming *Planet Earth II* series. Their real time responses to the footage were captured using Crowd Emotion's facial mapping technology and following the clips participants were asked to complete psychometric tests and a further questionnaire to assess the impact on their mood and outlook of watching the footage. Alongside a control clip, clips of a popular drama and a reel of recent news stories were used to measure the impact of *Planet Earth II* content against a range of variables.

The Results:

Participants rated themselves from 0-10 for feeling each of 14 groups of emotions immediately before and after watching a stimulus clip. Results were grouped into global mean scores for each emotion group for each type of stimulus watched, with the Australian panel results reflecting the global findings. Analysis below refers to the change in mean scores across all respondents viewing a natural history clip.

Participants watching *Planet Earth II* clips showed:

- Significant increases in feelings of **awe, amazement, wonder; curiosity, interest and wanting to explore; joy, excitement and enthusiasm; contentment, relaxation and peacefulness; amusement, having fun and laughing**
- Significant decreases in **nervousness, anxiety and fear; stress and overburden; anger and irritability; tiredness, fatigue and low energy.**
- When tested against a control group, all results above are proven to have been caused by watching natural history content.

The demographic breakdown of the global sample revealed:

- On the majority of measures, women experienced greater changes in emotions than men as a result of watching *Planet Earth II*.
- Although both genders experienced significant increases in **awe, amazement, wonder**, the increase for women was 35% greater than amongst men. Watching *Planet Earth II* had a more pronounced effect on younger people, who were feeling higher levels of negative emotions at the outset. Younger people (16-24s) experienced the greatest amounts of change in nine of the 14 emotion sets amongst all age groups.
 - Their significant decreases in levels of **nervousness, anxiety and fear; stress and overburden**, and **tiredness, fatigue and low energy** were amongst the largest seen across all age groups in any emotion set.
 - Moreover, they had some of the highest levels of these emotions to begin with.

The BBC study adds to a growing body of scientific evidence proving that a connection to nature is of fundamental importance to a person's health, happiness and wellbeing. In parallel with this global research, Professor Keltner carried out an extensive review of over 150 scientific studies exploring the relationship between emotion and nature. The review commissioned by the BBC revealed multiple benefits to connecting with nature.

BBC Earth literature review findings:

- Access to nature, both physical and through filmed footage and imagery can help people to manage the stress of modern living.
- A connection to nature has multiple positive effects on outlook and behaviour including:
 - Enhanced attention, focus and cognitive performance
 - It decreases stress and enhances calm
 - People who experience a connection with nature are more pro-social and effective teamworkers
 - There are significant studies demonstrating the importance of nature to our physical health

Professor Dacher Keltner of the University of California, Berkely commented: *"The shifts in emotion demonstrated in the BBC study as a result of watching this powerful natural history series are significant as we know that wonder and contentment are the foundations of human happiness. If people experience feelings of awe, they are more likely to display empathetic and charitable behaviours and have been shown to be better able to handle stress."*

Mike Gunton, Executive Producer of Planet Earth II said: *"What excites me about this study is seeing how Planet Earth II connects with people on a deep emotional level - as a film maker that is very rewarding. We're always striving to bring our audiences closer to nature and it's thrilling to see how this can generate such positive emotions and have a powerful impact on our viewer's mood and wellbeing. I hope that in sparking an appreciation of the natural world Planet Earth II will also encourage people to love and protect the natural world."*

BBC Earth will support the project by publishing a variety of exclusive content across its social platforms - BBC Earth Facebook, YouTube, Twitter & Instagram. To find out more about The Real Happiness Project and how you can benefit or get involved, visit www.realhappinessproject.com

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For more information, please contact: Laura Dumbrell, Head of Communications BBC Worldwide ANZ, on 02 9744 4502.

NOTES TO EDITORS

About BBC Worldwide

BBC Worldwide is the main commercial arm and a wholly owned subsidiary of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Its vision is to build the BBC's brands, audiences, commercial returns and reputation across the world. This is achieved through investing in, commercialising and showcasing content from the BBC around the world, in a way that is consistent with BBC standards and values. The business also champions British creativity globally.

In 2015/16 BBC Worldwide generated headline profits of £133.8m and headline sales of £1,029.4m and returned £222.2m to the BBC.

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