

Environmental benefits from Covid-19 lockdown

In the last few weeks, faced with lockdown restrictions, many people have reconnected with their neighbourhood environments, delighting in the small things previously overlooked; the wildflowers, tree blossom, animal tracks and the sound of (near) silence broken only by melodious birdsong. Is this the moment that we all start to slow down, immerse ourselves in the natural world and start to value our environment more?

At Holkham, England's largest national nature reserve, wardens have noticed a greater proliferation of wildlife, such as sparrowhawks, stoats and deer. In a 'normal' year, over a million people visit the reserve; now the area is deserted with car parks and visitor centres closed. Beach-nesting birds, including oystercatchers, sandwich terns and the endangered ringed plover are expected to thrive.

Despite the benefits, concerns exist about the reduction in wildlife monitoring and the increase in some illegal activities. Many wildlife charities are experiencing a fall in donations and members of staff are being furloughed.

Holkham National Nature Reserve – deserted during lockdown



<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/29/uk-wildlife-enjoys-humans-lockdown-but-concerns-raised-over-conservation#img-2>

Air quality has improved dramatically both in the UK and across the world. In the UK, levels of particulates and nitrogen dioxide have fallen by 30-50% in several cities including London, Bristol, Birmingham and Cardiff. As transport and industry have ground to a halt, similar falls have been recorded across the world, including in Italy, China and India. In Delhi, one of the world's most polluted cities, residents are enjoying unprecedented clean air and distant views of the Himalayas. Global carbon emissions have also fallen significantly, with the massive reduction in flights contributing to this.

Whether it's goats in Llandudno, deer in London or wild boar in Haifa (Israel), there have been many reports of wildlife returning to environments now emptied of people. In Thailand, rare leatherback sea turtles have returned to beaches now largely deserted due to the lack of tourists. There have also been sightings of dugongs, vulnerable mammals related to manatees which are rarely seen close to shore due to their sensitivity to speed boats and people.

Despite the dreadful human consequences of this pandemic, it is shedding a light onto what our environment could look like if we choose a new 'normality' when the lockdown is finally lifted.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/29/uk-wildlife-enjoys-humans-lockdown-but-concerns-raised-over-conservation>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/27/coronavirus-uk-lockdown-big-drop-air-pollution>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/apr/20/coronavirus-lockdown-boosts-numbers-of-thailands-rare-sea-turtles>

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