Why not let nature speak for itself?

The role of the presenter is currently acting as a dead weight on the advance of nature television. What’s more, the argument that personable presenters help draw viewers into shows is now outweighed by the fashion for making them the focus of the programmes. This isn’t confined to macho croc wrestlers and brainless celebrities looking for a ‘green star’ on their CVs. One of the most awesome pieces of film ever made of British wildlife – the dusk roosting flights of a million starlings over the Somerset Levels – was all but ruined by the director’s insistence on interrupting the geometry of the performance every five seconds with a cut-in of the presenter waving his arms as if he were conducting them, or as if we were incapable of knowing how to respond without a presenter’s cues.

Fortunately, it’s now possible to watch this sequence uninterrupted – in an advertisement whose producers seem to have a more respectful opinion of the public’s visual sophistication. Director Anthony Minghella, chair of the British Film Institute, has warned that film-makers persistently underrate the visual competence of a generation of viewers growing up with digital cameras and YouTube. The natural world – with its fuzzy logic, ceaseless improvisations and multiple circular storylines – is an obvious subject for new interpretations. John Clare made this leap in nature poetry 150 years ago. It’s about time we had a go with film.

1. In the first paragraph, the writer is suggesting that television presenters on nature programmes
   A mislead the public with inaccurate commentaries.
   B are mostly uninformed about the issues dealt with.
   C distract viewers from the power of the visual images.
   D help a wider public understand the issues under discussion.

2. The writer mentions a poet in the second paragraph to show how
   A behind the times nature programmes are.
   B flexible nature programme makers need to be.
   C dull nature programmes have tended to become.
   D effective a new approach to nature programmes could be.
RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

So, is there such a thing as responsible tourism? According to Dr Harold Goodwin of the University of Greenwich, responsible tourism is one which generates economic benefits for the host community whilst minimising any environmental and cultural impact. In other words, it engenders respect between local people and tourists, and involves both in decision-making. Goodwin insists, however, that responsible tourism is not to be confused with worthy or dull tourism. Even if your trip takes you to the Third World, you needn't let the problem of world poverty spoil your meal in a local restaurant. You should, however, be aware of the fact that the same meal taken in an international hotel is less likely to benefit the local community.

One of the strongest proponents of responsible tourism is Justin Francis, co-founder of Responsibletravel.com. He points out that British tourists spend £2 billion a year on holidays in developing countries – a figure roughly equivalent to their government's entire overseas aid budget. Moreover, in the context of expanding world trade, tourism is a unique type of purchase, he maintains, and the thing that sets it apart from others is that the end consumer gets to observe its impact at first hand. Others are more sceptical. A few years ago, ecotourism was all the rage, but that seems to have few defenders these days. Even Justin Francis agrees that the term has become overused to the point of becoming more-or-less meaningless. Ecotourism has become a marketing buzzword, hijacked by tour companies wanting to exploit the public interest in the environment. A lot of people jumped on the bandwagon and ended up doing more harm than good.

3. Harold Goodwin stresses that even responsible tourism
   A should be a source of enjoyment for tourists.
   B may not bring economic benefits to all areas.
   C will have a negative impact on the host culture.
   D will lead to the exploitation of poorer communities.

4. According to Justin Francis, what makes tourism different from other aspects of world trade?
   A the fact that it is less susceptible to aggressive marketing than other products
   B the fact that tourists see the effect they are having on the places they visit
   C the power of the tour companies to influence how people regard it
   D the level of income that it generates in developing countries
Melting ice caps, annual summer heat waves, tropical super-storms – the potential effects of global climate change are rarely out of the headlines. This serious, in-depth coverage of the phenomenon is, of course, to be welcomed, but with so many different voices contributing to the debate on future climatic conditions, it can be difficult to sort fact from – if not fiction – then overstatements and misrepresentations. To help clarify the debate, the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) – with funding from the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs – has developed ‘Changing climate, changing lives?’, an exhibition currently on display at the Society’s London headquarters until 22 August.

The exhibition explores the science behind climate change, projections for the future and the possible effects of climate change on the UK. With the scale and magnitude of climate change being so huge, it can be difficult to know what difference each of us can make to help mitigate global warming. The Society’s exhibition tackles this head on. While addressing and exploring the big issues, there are also suggestions on how communities can become more sustainable, and for small changes that we can all make – such as using energy-saving light bulbs and adjusting our central heating thermostats – which collectively can make a significant contribution.

5 The stated aim of the exhibition about climate change is
A to correct errors of fact in press coverage of the issue.
B to provoke more serious debate than has taken place so far.
C to help people understand recent scientific discussions better.
D to give a new interpretation of scientific studies into the subject.

6 The word ‘this’ in line 35 refers to
A the scale and magnitude of climate change.
B addressing and exploring the big issues.
C the purpose of the exhibition.
D the role of the individual.
Part 2

You are going to read an article about a designer. Six paragraphs have been removed from the extract. Choose from the paragraphs A–G the one which fits each gap (7–12). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.

Breaking the mould

Karim Rashid is a man who can make even a rubbish bin look good

The man in the rock-star white leather suit and the luminous white and orange shoes is being mobbed by autograph hunters. Tall, glamorous and sporting white-rimmed shades, Karim Rashid has arrived, in every sense. The designer is attending the opening of a new homes store on New York’s Sixth Avenue and everyone wants a piece of him, from giggling teenagers to the men in grey suits circling him protectively.

Alternatively, you might even be reading this while sitting comfortably on the ‘Oh’, Rashid’s ubiquitous, cheap-as-chips, stackable plastic chair. For Rashid specialises in reasonably priced objects of desire. The industrious industrial designer, born in Cairo to an Egyptian father and English mother but raised and educated in Canada, would rather call himself a philosopher-designer.

This is a dazzling white space, with rainbow-hued metallic furniture and shelves full of his gem-coloured glass and plastic designs, ranging from iconic perfume bottles for Issey Miyake to shapely containers for homely washing-up liquid. He lives ‘over the shop’ in a large loft with his wife, the computer artist Megan Lang. He and Megan wear matching tattoos based on the recurring vocabulary of symbols he uses in his work, such as the plus sign for love.

Indeed, the softly spoken 43-year-old does seem happiest talking about his current projects, which include hotels in Brighton and London. But before we get to that he does have a go at recalling the wave of furniture, homeware, fashion and art he has conceived since establishing Karim Rashid Inc.

But that’s all in the past. Rashid has no truck with nostalgia and loathes the current mania for retro style. ‘I’m kind of sick of the past. The here and now is all we’ve got,’ he says, speaking at a rate of knots that befits someone who says he rarely sleeps more than a few hours most nights and wakes regularly at 4am, his head bursting with thrilling ideas.

For Rashid, realising this ambition means juggling as many projects as he can keep in the air. He is currently designing furniture and lighting for about a dozen companies; he is also working on a range of glassware, the interiors of restaurants in New York, Moscow and Mexico, and planning his own shop. Then there’s the customised clothing collection that will retail on the Internet, as well as carpets, toys, bicycles and hot tubs.

I feel tired just thinking about this vast range of professional and recreational interests, but there’s no stopping Rashid. ‘As well as the hotels in the UK, I’m doing one in Athens and another in Los Angeles,’ he says, adding that as someone who constantly jets around the world, he’s been desperate to get his hands on the hospitality industry. He intends to change the way we look at hotel living. ‘Staying in a hotel should make people think about their own homes,’ he says. ‘I want guests to go away relaxed, but thinking how boring their own surroundings are.’
A ‘We’re living in a time of disposability and a time of no ownership,’ he continues by way of explanation. ‘What that means is you can perpetually have newness, you can change with the times and stay technologically on top – which is why I want to shape the future of the world.’

B To this end, he has even written a book, ambitiously called I Want to Change the World. In the past decade, he has created more than 800 objects – for which he’s won some 50 awards. ‘Honestly, I’ve lost count of exactly how many things I’ve designed now,’ admits Rashid when we meet in his downtown studio.

C The list he comes up with includes cigarette lighters, watches, trainers, packaging for Prada’s unique disposable daily cosmetics range, plastic pens, salt and pepper shakers, board games, a rubber chess set (which, incidentally, sold 23,000 in just six weeks), as well as fabulously futuristic furniture and organically shaped interiors for upmarket restaurants.

D So what does this design dynamo do to switch off? ‘I change the furniture around in our loft, which is sensuously minimalist anyway,’ he says. ‘I grew up with that idea – my dad used to move the furniture round in our house every Sunday. I guess I’m my father’s son, which makes me very proud.’

E Dressed in pristine white (he gave his thirty black designer-label suits to a second-hand shop) with rapper-style, chunky silver ‘blob’ jewellery, he insists that the couple live their lives forwards, not backwards, hence his inability to remember his many achievements.

F And as if all this were not enough, Rashid also composes ambient music and, in his spare time – of which he obviously has lots – he DJs around New York’s club scene. According to his website, you can hire him for parties.

G Actually, many of us already own one: his ‘Garbo’ plastic wastepaper bin, which comes in improbable colours such as metallic green or lilac, for instance. More than three million of these curvaceous, covetable cult objects have been sold worldwide in less than four years.
The codfather

The cod, the species of fish that features in the famous British dish ‘fish and chips’, could soon make the leap out of the frying pan and into popular culture according to Karol Rzeplkowski, an effervescent Scot of Polish descent. ‘Someone approached us specifically with a view to making iPod covers out of cod skins – it’s seen as an alternative to snake skin for the fashion industry,’ laughs 42-year-old Karol, managing director of Johnson Seafarms, the world’s first organic cod farm which is located in the Shetland Isles. Lifestyle entrepreneurs will have to wait though, because the main target market for Karol’s carefully reared cod is clearly a consumer armed with knife and fork rather than a digital music player.

Along with business partner Laurent Viguie, Karol has put enormous effort into the technology and diversification that they hope will bring sea farming into the twenty-first century with a profitable, environmentally friendly, cod-farming venture. All of this is literally oceans away from the chance meeting that brought together two businessmen with the clout to push forward a scheme deemed outlandish by most people in the business.

Karol and Laurent struck up a friendship whilst on a diving trip off the Caribbean island of Grenada in 1999, and realised that their different business experience would make them into a formidable team. Laurent was a trained lawyer, restaurateur and high-profile figure in the music industry, while Karol was running Grenada’s biggest leisure company, having grown up helping at his father’s delicatessen in Edinburgh. Karol has never flinched from hard work. ‘One day, it might be nice to have a holiday … ’ he says wistfully.

Life in Grenada was good, but Karol was married to a Shetlander and wanted his 12-year-old son to grow up with a good education as well as personal freedom. ‘Somewhere he can walk out of the door at nine in the morning and we don’t need to worry if he’s not back until nine at night.’ Most people might think of moving to a sleepy village within commuting distance of a big city, but he found his idyll on a scattering of islands that are closer to the Arctic Circle than to London, where puffs outnumber people by ten to one.

After moving to Shetland, Karol found employment as marketing director at Johnson Seafarms, a small, family-owned company which mostly reared salmon. Two fishing issues featured on the public agenda around that time: a spate of public health scares over the chemicals used to farm salmon, and the plight of wild cod as over-fishing devastated shoals in the North Sea. Cod stocks there have plummeted 75 percent over the past fifteen years, bringing the lynchpin of UK cuisine almost to the cusp of extinction – yet Britons tuck into some 170,000 tonnes of the fish every year.

The solution was obvious for Karol, ‘Farmed salmon was becoming a tainted industry in people’s minds. I said: why don’t we just move into another species? But everyone was rather taken aback at the idea.’ After convincing sceptical colleagues, he faced the much tougher task of persuading hard-boiled financiers to stump up millions of pounds for an unprecedented experiment. Karol enlisted the support of his old friend Laurent who, convinced that the plan had potential, decided to join forces with Karol and take over the company. With money at Johnson Seafarms fast running out, the pair headed to London in 2004 to seek emergency funds of £21 million. ‘There was a great deal of misgiving, but the people who were most reticent were the ones who ended up investing,’ adds Karol. With enough investors interested, the company went through the process known as ‘due diligence’, which saw zealous lawyers and accountants descending on the Shetland Isles to scour the paperwork and check every last detail. ‘It was a major cliffhanger – at any moment it could have fallen flat on its face,’ says Karol. When it didn’t, he says the biggest thrill was being able to call the company’s twenty-seven employees and tell them their jobs were safe.

The end of the funding drama was the start of real work: farming a new species of fish in a way that would address increasingly pressing environmental and ethical concerns. Today, Johnson Seafarms takes wild codlings from regularly renewed breeding stocks, nurturing them on a natural diet throughout their stages of development. The fish swim about in large sea pens enclosed with nets that are regularly cleaned rather than treated with chemicals, and come with shady areas for repose and ‘toys’ such as coconut rope to chew on. It would be easy to dismiss this fastidiousness as shrewd public relations, but the company has won enthusiastic accolades from animal charities which don’t hold back from lambasting the corporate world when they see fit. The big test is still to come as the company waits to see whether the shopper will take to the new organic cod.
13 How has Karol reacted to the idea of making cod skin iPod covers?

A It’s not his main priority at the moment.
B He thinks that it is a ridiculous suggestion.
C He cannot see them catching on as a fashion item.
D It is something he is looking forward to trying out.

14 Karol and his business partner, Laurent, met

A whilst both on holiday in Grenada.
B because of a shared leisure interest.
C as a result of their business dealings.
D through a contact in the food industry.

15 Why did Karol move to Shetland?

A He had the offer of a job in the area.
B He had family responsibilities on the islands.
C He could see there would be business opportunities there.
D He wanted his family to benefit from a particular lifestyle.

16 What problem was Johnson Seafarms facing when Karol first worked there?

A a decline in the local fishing industry
B the limited resources available to the company
C a loss of public confidence in fish-farming methods
D poor health affecting the main type of fish it produced

17 How did Karol’s colleagues react to his proposed solution to the company’s problems?

A They refused to cooperate with him.
B They eventually accepted his suggestion.
C They remained unconvinced that it would be successful.
D They immediately realised it was their only hope of survival.

18 Which phrase from the sixth paragraph is used to emphasise how keen someone was to do something properly?

A ‘hard-boiled’ (line 31)
B ‘join forces’ (line 33)
C ‘a great deal of misgiving’ (line 35)
D ‘zealous’ (line 37)

19 In the last paragraph, we learn that animal charities

A have expressed their concerns about the company’s new methods of fish farming.
B have given their seal of approval to the company’s approach to fish farming.
C remain unsure that the fish will not suffer in the company’s fish farms.
D are generally supportive of companies engaged in fish farming.
You are going to read an article about call-centre workers who give advice to people over the phone. For questions 20–34, choose from the people (A–D). The call-centre workers may be chosen more than once.

**Which of the call-centre workers says that she ...**

advises people on the legal background to a problem?  

enjoys the variety of things which people call about?  

finds the equipment that she works with reassuring?  

used to find it hard to work with only a spoken description of people’s problems?  

gets back to certain callers within a given period of time?  

can arrange for an expert to visit callers at home?  

has identified a regular pattern in calls on certain subjects?  

helps people to solve unexpected problems at night?  

was sorry not to be in direct touch with the people she had the skills to help?  

finds some people have unrealistic expectations of the service she can provide?  

sometimes has to convince people that their problems will be taken seriously?  

sometimes has to correct information obtained elsewhere?  

gets the same people calling back more than once?  

was initially apprehensive about the type of problems people would call with?  

looks forward to the challenge of unexpected individual enquiries?
A Claire Lippold, 23, works for the Bat Conservation Trust

I did a degree in biology, and studied bats as part of my thesis. When I saw the ad for this job, I thought it would be perfect for me. We get about ten thousand calls a year, many from people worried that if they have bats in their loft they can't have any building work done. They need the right advice, because the law protects bats. We're contracted by an organisation called Natural England to arrange a service whereby anybody with bats on their property can have a specialist volunteer come out and give information and advice about the creatures they're living with. Generally, once they have the information, they're happy. It's the sign of a really green environment if you have bats. In the summer, we get calls when bats have flown uninvited into people's houses after dark. We advise turning the lights out, shutting the door, leaving the window open and allowing the bat to find its own way out. One of the most common myths we have to explode is that bats always turn left when they leave roofs. Apparently that was printed in a magazine recently, so we got a clutch of calls about it. We also get people calling and humming the entire Batman theme tune down the phone. The jokes are pretty predictable, I'm afraid.

B Anthea McNulty, 26, works for NHS Direct, the phone-in helpline operated by the National Health Service

Having worked in nurse training for a while, I found I missed the patient contact I'd enjoyed doing nursing itself. When I saw this job, I thought of it as a way of getting some of that contact back -- without the cleaning up! I remember the dread of what the calls might be about on my first day, but they give you so much training before you're let loose that you can handle it. It was a bit difficult not having the physical clues I'd been able to pick up on the wards. But you very quickly get used to working with the computer, it makes you feel safe. Occasionally, there are problems with the system but you're never left with a blank screen, and because we're a national service there's always somebody else who can take a call. The most common calls are about coughs and colds, things people can manage on their own, but I need to look out for anything that will indicate that they might need to go and see a doctor. People can be too embarrassed to go to a hospital with what seem like minor ailments, and we do have to reassure them that if they do have to go in, people aren't going to laugh at them.

C Agnes Thomson, 60, works for a major broadcasting company

Yesterday, I got lots of calls relating to weekly programmes, though there was quite a contrast: the radio show for the blind, 'In Touch', and 'Watchdog' on TV. The 'In Touch' callers had heard of some new equipment and wanted further details. 'Watchdog' is a consumer programme and people generally call me because they have a problem with a product from a company we've covered on the show. We have regular callers, some very nice and some not so nice, and you get to know them. Quite often people phone to complain spontaneously, and when we call them again within ten days with a response, which we promise to do in some cases, they've forgotten what made them cross. Television programmes probably generate more calls, particularly medical programmes or programmes about children. People have a sense that we're a general repository of knowledge and wisdom -- which we're not! There'll have been a show that has covered most things at one time or another so I can always look things up. As a result, I have a lot of what you might call useless knowledge.

D Caroline Hickman, 34, works for a company with a wide range of household products

I really get a lot out of the work. We have such a wide range of products -- from beauty and haircare through to nappies and household cleaners -- that no two calls are ever the same. With laundry products, for example, we get lots of specific queries -- people want to know what to use with certain types of material. We can't always go into details of all the settings of different brands of machine, though. We also get a lot of calls about skincare from people who want to know about specific ingredients in our products. You also get fascinating insight into the country's lifestyles. For instance, we tend to get lots of calls about cleaning products on a Monday, presumably because people buy them over the weekend, then, towards Friday we'll get haircare and beauty because they're planning a night out. I also long for one-off problems I can really get my teeth into -- the ones that come out of blue. We once had a call from a woman who'd seen a wedding dress on one of our TV adverts and wanted one identical to it for her own big day. We found that it was still at the television studio and was available for her to borrow -- which she did. It just goes to show that it's always worth asking!