



Practice Exam - The Natural World

Cambridge IGCSE ESL 0510/0511 | Reading practice paper

Exercise 1

Read the article about counting butterflies in a park then answer the questions.

A park butterfly count

Every summer, volunteers in one city park take part in a butterfly count. The count is simple enough for beginners, but it provides useful information about the health of the park. Butterflies respond quickly to changes in weather, plants and pollution, so a rise or fall in numbers can suggest that something in the environment is changing. Volunteers also note unusual events, such as grass cutting or a nearby festival, because these may affect the number of butterflies seen.

Volunteers follow the same route each time. This is important because counting butterflies in different places would make results harder to compare. The route passes flower beds, long grass, a pond and a sunny path near the playground. Volunteers walk slowly and record only butterflies seen within a fixed distance, rather than chasing insects across the park.

Training is provided before the count begins. Some butterflies look similar, so volunteers learn to notice wing shape, colour patterns and flight behaviour. They also practise using a small guide card. If they are unsure, they record the butterfly as unidentified rather than guessing. Organisers prefer a careful unknown record to an inaccurate named one.

Weather affects the count. Butterflies are less active in strong wind or heavy rain, so counts are postponed if conditions are poor. Very hot weather can also change results because some butterflies rest in shade during the middle of the day. For this reason, most counts take place in the morning when the route is warm but not extreme.

The results help park managers decide how to care for different areas. If butterflies are rarely seen near short grass, managers may leave some sections uncut for longer. If a species appears near one group of plants, more of those plants may be added. The count gives ordinary visitors a way to contribute to conservation while learning to notice small details in a familiar place. The records are sent to a national database, where local results can be compared with counts from other parks and gardens.

Volunteers use the same walking route each time they count. This makes the results easier to compare, although they still record weather conditions because butterflies are less visible on cold or windy days.

Exercise 1 questions

Answer the questions using information from the article. Write short answers.

1 When does the butterfly count take place? [1]

2 What can a rise or fall in butterfly numbers suggest? [1]

3 Why do volunteers follow the same route each time? [1]

4 Which area near the playground is included in the route? [1]

5 What should volunteers do instead of guessing? [1]

6 List three features of the butterfly count. [3]

Exercise 2

Read the article about four nature observations (A-D). Then answer Questions 9(a)-9(i).

A Pond watch

Students observe a school pond once a week and record signs of life, such as insects, frogs and floating plants. They do not remove animals from the water. The project is useful because small ponds can change quickly after hot weather or heavy rain. Students also record whether the water looks clear or cloudy, but they avoid touching unknown plants. Observers avoid leaning over the water because shadows can disturb animals.

B Tree diary

A class keeps a diary of one tree through the year. Students record leaf colour, buds, flowers, fruit and fallen branches. The activity encourages patience because changes may be slow for several weeks. Photographs are taken from the same position each month. The diary is displayed beside the classroom window, so students can add notes when they notice sudden changes.

C Bird feeder log

A garden group records which birds visit a feeder at different times of day. The feeder is cleaned regularly to prevent disease. Students learn that food attracts birds, but it can also attract larger animals, so seed is stored in a sealed container. The group reduces feeding during warm weather if leftover seed begins to spoil. They also move fallen seed away from paths to avoid attracting rats.

D Cloud sketchbook

A geography club sketches clouds before checking the weather later in the day. The aim is not artistic perfection, but noticing shapes and height. Students compare sketches with weather records to see whether their observations helped them predict rain or clearer skies. Sketches are dated and timed because the same sky can look very different within an hour. Students write one sentence predicting what may happen next. Sketches are dated and timed because cloud shapes change quickly.

The observation notes show that nature study often depends on patience. Learners may need to repeat the same walk, sketch or count before a pattern becomes clear enough to trust.

The entries also warn that weather, light and human movement can affect observations. This means a missing animal or quiet pond does not always prove that nothing is happening there.

The guide also reminds students to record where they stood during each observation. A small change in position can affect what they see, especially near water, trees or feeding areas.

Exercise 2 questions

For each statement, write the correct letter A, B, C or D on the line. Each letter may be used more than once.

No.	Which nature observation...	A-D
9(a)	uses photographs taken from one fixed place
9(b)	must be cleaned to reduce health risks
9(c)	compares observations with later weather
9(d)	does not allow animals to be taken out
9(e)	may show little change for several weeks
9(f)	needs food to be stored safely
9(g)	focuses on shape and height rather than drawing skill
9(h)	can change quickly after rain or heat
9(i)	records fallen branches

Exercise 3

Read the article about making a wildlife-friendly school garden then complete the notes.

A garden for wildlife

A wildlife-friendly garden does not need to be large, but it should offer food, water and shelter. Schools often begin by planting flowers that provide nectar for insects. Native plants are usually a good choice because local insects are already adapted to them. A mix of flowering times is useful, so insects can find food in different seasons.

Water is another important feature. A shallow dish with stones can help insects drink safely, while a small pond can support frogs and dragonflies. Deep water is not necessary and may create safety concerns. Whatever water source is used, it needs regular checking so it does not become dirty or dry out completely.

Shelter can be created in simple ways. A pile of logs may provide a home for beetles, while long grass gives insects somewhere to hide. Some schools leave leaves under hedges instead of clearing every corner. The garden may look less tidy, but this untidy appearance can be useful for wildlife. Students can compare which plants attract the most insects, but they should remember that weather can affect results on any single day.

Students should observe the garden without disturbing it too much. They can count visiting insects, photograph plant changes and keep a seasonal diary. Teachers remind students not to pick flowers during observations, because removing flowers reduces food for insects. A successful wildlife garden teaches patience as well as science. The diary is reviewed at the end of the year to decide which features should be kept, moved or expanded. This prevents the garden becoming a project that is planted once and then forgotten.

The garden plan leaves one corner untidy on purpose, with leaves, logs and longer grass. Students label it carefully so visitors understand that the area is a habitat rather than forgotten maintenance.

Students choose plants that flower at different times of year. This gives insects food beyond one short season and makes the garden useful even when it is not at its brightest.

Watering duties are shared by week rather than by day. This makes it easier to know who is responsible and prevents several students watering the same plants while others are forgotten.

Exercise 3 questions

Complete the notes using information from the article. Write short words or phrases.

Notes	Write short answers
10 What a wildlife garden should provide	- - -
11 Ways schools can support wildlife	- - - -

Exercise 4

Read the article about watching a sunrise walk then answer the questions.

Up before the birds

My aunt persuaded me to join a sunrise walk at a nature reserve. I agreed because she promised breakfast afterwards, not because I wanted to get up at four-thirty. When we arrived, the car park was almost empty and the air felt cold. I wondered why anyone would choose to start a day like that.

The guide asked us to walk quietly along a wooden path through the reeds. At first, I could hear only our footsteps. Then small sounds began to separate themselves from the silence: water moving, wings shaking and birds calling from different directions. The guide did not name every bird immediately. She told us to listen first and ask questions later.

As the sky became lighter, the reserve changed. Shapes that had looked flat in the dark became trees, water channels and low islands. A bird rose from the reeds so suddenly that everyone stopped. I had seen birds before, of course, but watching one appear out of a place that had seemed empty felt different.

The most surprising moment was not dramatic. It was when the sun finally reached the water and the whole surface turned silver. Nobody spoke for a while. I realised that part of the experience was waiting long enough for small changes to matter. If we had arrived later, the reserve would still have been beautiful, but we would have missed the change. The writer had expected the guide to provide facts immediately, but the delay made the group more alert.

I still do not enjoy early mornings, and I would not pretend otherwise. But I understand now why my aunt wanted me to go. Nature is not always about rare animals or distant landscapes. Sometimes it is about seeing a familiar world at an unfamiliar hour and noticing what is usually hidden by noise, speed and habit. He also realised that silence was not empty; it was full of small movements he usually ignored.

On the walk home, the path looked ordinary again. That surprised me, because the place had not changed; only the light, the sound and my attention had made it feel different.

Exercise 4 questions

For each question, choose the correct answer, A, B or C.

12 Why did the writer agree to join the walk? [1]

- A He often visited the reserve at sunrise.
- B He needed to study birds for school.
- C He was promised breakfast afterwards.

13 What did the guide ask the group to do first? [1]

- A listen before asking questions
- B write down every bird name
- C walk quickly to the water

14 What changed as the sky became lighter? [1]

- A The car park became crowded.
- B The writer could see details in the landscape.
- C The guide stopped the walk.

15 Why was the silver water important to the writer? [1]

- A It showed the value of waiting for small changes.
- B It helped him identify a rare bird.
- C It meant breakfast was ready.

16 What does the writer admit near the end? [1]

- A He now visits every day.
- B He prefers noisy places.
- C He still dislikes early mornings.

17 What is the writer's final message about nature? [1]

- A It is only interesting in distant landscapes.
- B It can reveal familiar places in new ways.
- C It is mainly about seeing rare animals.

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Exercise 1

1. every summer
2. something in the environment is changing
3. to make results easier to compare
4. a sunny path
5. record the butterfly as unidentified
6. butterflies are less active in strong wind or heavy rain; most counts take place in the morning; managers may leave some sections of grass uncut for longer

Exercise 2

9(a) B; 9(b) C; 9(c) D; 9(d) A; 9(e) B; 9(f) C; 9(g) D; 9(h) A; 9(i) B

Exercise 3

10 What a wildlife garden should provide

- food
- water
- shelter

11 Ways schools can support wildlife

- planting flowers that provide nectar
- shallow dish with stones
- pile of logs
- leave leaves under hedges

Exercise 4

12 C; 13 A; 14 B; 15 A; 16 C; 17 B

12 C - He says breakfast persuaded him.

13 A - She told them to listen first.

14 B - Flat shapes became trees, channels and islands.

15 A - He says waiting made small changes matter.

16 C - He says he still does not enjoy early mornings.

17 B - He says it can mean seeing a familiar world at an unfamiliar hour.