

## Chris Packham's Desert Island Discs interview with Kirsty Young. October 18<sup>th</sup> 2013

*This section begins about 7 minutes 20 seconds into the interview, and describes Chris's formative early experiences.*

[What was your very first brush with nature?]

My parents say it was crawling around on the lawn of our very small house in Southampton and picking up ladybirds and putting them into matchboxes.

[And in terms of the location of your house, it wasn't out in the rural idyll was it? It was a suburban house?]

It was on the edge of Southampton. There were some – what the council called – wasteland – it's never wasted on me I can tell you – I made the most of that wasteland. There I found badgers and foxes and snakes and butterflies and my first hedge sparrow's nest, I remember that very distinctly. I was about nine. I was walking down the edge of the field on my way home and I parted a bramble bush and looked in and saw this little cup filled with these fluorescing blue eggs and they looked beautiful beyond compare.

[What was the fascination? – what was it stirring in you when you looked at it?]

I think in those days it was the simplicity of nature's perfection. When I looked at ladybirds for instance, on the tip of my finger, poised to take to the air, they all looked immaculate. They were symmetrical, none of

them had lost limbs, they were neat, everything they had seemed to have a purpose and a function, and they never failed.

And again, I remember being at the bus-stop in Woodmill Lane and there was a starling that had been killed by a car, and it was lying in the gutter. I picked it up and fanned its wing, and that sort of mail of feathers, intricate, perfect, beautiful, light, splendid – they were shimmering in the sunlight in my palm. I was so excited.