



AS IT IS

Musician Plays for Monkeys in Thailand

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When British musician Paul Barton performs in central Thailand lately, his energetic listeners react wildly. Some pull his hair or jump on his piano. Others steal his music.

The behavior is normal, however, because these crowds are truly wild --- wild monkeys to be exact.

Barton plays often to the animals in Lopburi, an area known for its populations of wild macaque monkeys. The pianist hopes the music shows bring calm to the animals during the coronavirus crisis.

The disease has caused problems for the monkeys, too. They are hungry. The restrictions on tourism mean fewer people come to see the monkeys and feed them.

“We need to make an effort to make sure that they eat **properly**. And when they eat properly they will be calmer and will not be aggressive,” said Barton, 59, a long-time Thailand resident.

Barton has played at four sites in Lopburi, including at an ancient Hindu temple, a store and an old movie theater.

The macaques quickly surround Barton when he plays Greensleeves, Beethoven’s Für Elise and Michael Nyman’s Diary of Love. Some of the creatures sit on his chair, while others climb up his body and touch his head.

“A wonderful **opportunity** to see the wild animals just being themselves,” said Barton, from Yorkshire in northern England.

But, Barton keeps his attention on his performance, even as a small monkey runs over his hands on the instrument. Other monkeys take control of his music papers.

“I was surprised to play the piano and find that they were actually eating the music as I was playing it.”

But, he added, “I wasn’t going to let those things **distract** from the project which is to play the music for these wonderful macaques.”

The monkeys are Barton’s latest animal fans. Past wildlife audiences included elephants living in special protected areas.

Barton hopes to raise awareness of the monkeys’ hunger. At the same time, he hopes to study their behavior as they react to classical music.

“It’s possible that the music can play a part of the **rehabilitation** process,” he said.

I’m John Russell.

Prapan Chankaew reported on this story for Reuters. John Russell adapted it for Learning English. Katy Weaver was the editor.

Words in This Story

properly – *adv.* in a way that is acceptable or suitable

opportunity – *n.* an amount of time or a situation in which something can be done

distract – *v.* to take (attention) away from someone or something

rehabilitation – *n.* to bring (someone or something) back to a good condition

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