



TV choice by Sanjida O'Connell

Sanjida O'Connell is a zoologist who also produces and presents science and natural history programmes.

WILDLIFE HIGHLIGHTS: 12 APRIL TO 15 MAY

ANIMAL PLANET REPORT

ANIMAL PLANET, ON FRIDAYS FROM 7 APRIL, 8.00PM
A half-hour weekly current events series featuring the latest developments from the natural world such as a report on the multi-million dollar business that has grown up around wolf-watching in Yellowstone Park, a new frog species found in the rainforests of Sri Lanka and the tale of a baby hippo, adopted by a giant tortoise. Presented by Tim Vincent and Maxine Trump.

PLANET ACTION

ANIMAL PLANET, TUESDAYS FROM 9 MAY, 8PM
A team of enthusiastic amateur environmentalists work with WWF to solve wildlife problems, such as constructing rope bridges for Orang-utans in Borneo.

LEOPARD MAN

ANIMAL PLANET, SATURDAY 13 MAY, 9PM
The story of Fanie, a member of the Shangaan tribe who lives in a village on the borders of the Kruger National Park; he is a skilled tracker and lover of leopards.

INCREDIBLE JOURNEYS WITH STEVE LEONARD

BBC1, APRIL/MAY CHECK RADIO TIMES FOR DETAILS
Steve follows the epic journeys of migrating animals, including bar-headed geese who migrate over Everest, the highest mountain range in the world, and grey whales who travel 6,000 miles with their new born calves from Mexico to Alaska (see feature, page 46).



Steve Leonard's all-action approach to filming.



Picture credit

PICK OF THE MONTH

Happy birthday Sir David

David Attenborough's iconic encounter with gorillas during the filming of *Life on Earth*.

MY FAVOURITE ATTENBOROUGH MOMENT

UK LIVING TV, TWO-PARTER MAY. CHECK RADIO TIMES FOR DETAILS

GORILLAS REVISITED WITH DAVID ATTENBOROUGH

BBC4, 16 APRIL, 8PM

Joanna Lumley says he's a saint; Bjork thinks he's a deity. Sir David Attenborough, the god of the small screen, is going to be 80 on 8 May. In this two-parter, as well as listening to celebs on Sir David, we have the opportunity to revisit and vote for our favourite Attenborough moment. Sir David has been a hero to almost every presenter working in natural history today, from Alan Titchmarsh who grew up wanting to wear a safari suit, to Bill Oddie who says, "I would be very, very proud indeed to feel that I could

approach the integrity that David has." Others, like Lumley, struggle to define the special ingredient that has made him such a brilliant and trustworthy communicator.

Charlotte Uhlenbroek says, "At a time when we are incredibly removed from the natural world, he's brought us back in touch with nature." Bill Oddie has it spot on when he announces: "He's the best presenter the world has ever seen." So it's sad that Sir David, who has been presenting series on BBC tv since 1979, should have his birthday celebrated by UK Living, though Radio 4 is also marking the date (see right).

Nevertheless, BBC4 are featuring one poignant moment in his life – the scene in *Life on Earth* where Sir David whispers amongst the mountain gorillas of Rwanda. This clip is probably one

"At a time when we are incredibly removed from the natural world, he's brought us back in touch with nature."

of the most inspirational of all of Sir David's inspirational moments. In *Gorillas Revisited* he describes the background to filming in one of the most difficult locations on earth. Days before the crew arrived poachers had killed primatologist Dian Fossey's favourite gorilla and she was terribly ill. Army rebels chased the crew, strip searched Sir David, and the team only escaped with the footage because sound recordist Dickie Bird swapped the labels on the film cans so the soldiers seized unexposed film.

PARANORMAL PIGEONS

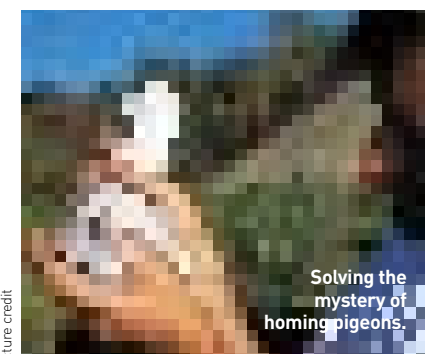
FIVE, WEDNESDAY 3 MAY, 8PM

Winning a pigeon race, according to pigeon fancier, Ragsy, is, "The next best thing to a good cup of tea." Pigeons have fascinated more than racers and fanciers, their ability to home was used to carry the results of the first Olympic games across the Greek empire in 776BC but even today, no one knows how they do it. Solve how pigeons find their way home, and scientists think we may be close to cracking one of the greatest remaining mysteries in biology – how animals migrate across oceans and continents to places they have never been.

Scientist Rupert Sheldrake thinks it's all down to morphic resonance, which is impossible to define but has something to do with cosmic memory, like an invisible elastic band, drawing the pigeons back. Ragsy helps him out by building a floating garden shed in the Sharpness Docks in Gloucestershire and installing 22 pigeons. The idea is to take the shed out to sea and see if the pigeons can find their way home.

Other scientists are sceptical. Dr Tim Guildford, from Oxford University, becomes increasingly belligerent, as the pigeons sit around in the docks for hours wondering who took their shed. Earlier it took them more than an hour to work out that their shed had moved from one side of the canal to the other. As Guildford says, "There's no point in having a big brain, if you don't need the processor."

In this intelligent film, producer Harry Marshall weaves the experiment in with the three competing theories for pigeon's homing instinct – magnetism, vision and smell. Smell seems to be far and away the most convincing; as for morphic resonance, Ragsy gets sea-sick waiting for his pigeons to find the elastic band, let alone their soaked garden shed.



Picture credit

Solving the mystery of homing pigeons.

Radio choice by Paul Evans

Paul Evans is a writer and radio broadcaster.

THE ARCHIVE HOUR: WILD TIMES – DAVID ATTENBOROUGH AT 80

6 MAY, 8PM.

BBC Radio is doing Sir David Attenborough proud this month when the *Archive Hour* will feature a special interview with Sir David by Brian Leith, together with extracts from archive material spanning a 50 year career in radio and television. David Attenborough's career is the history of natural history broadcasting, from Zoo Quest in the 1950s to his most recent landmark television series *Life in the Undergrowth* last autumn and the voice of this year's awesome, *Planet Earth*. What remains constant is the sense of wonder that flows so generously from that voice.

NATURE

MONDAYS 9.00PM FROM 15 MAY.

The new series kicks off with Uplands Nature: taking stock of what's happening to our upland heaths and moors and how this is affecting their wildlife. Earlier this year, English Nature, (the government's nature conservation advisers for England) reported on the state of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and revealed that although lowland SSSIs were doing well, only 50% of upland sites were up to scratch.

Nature, presented by yours truly, pulls its boots on and gets up there to find out why. We'll look at black grouse, red grouse and how management for them helps other birds like golden plover and curlew. But is that the only way to improve upland biodiversity? There will be plenty of other kinds of grouse too. What do farmers think about new environmental payment schemes for instance? Nothing is ever simple; that's what makes it interesting.



GOING OUT The top exhibitions & events

Learn about marine life (above: a blue girdled angelfish) and visit the newly-launched interactive Explorocean zone at the National Marine Aquarium, Plymouth.

ART EXHIBITIONS

» **WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR 2005**
Until 23 April: Natural History Museum, London. Until 1 May: Scotland Street School Museum ☎ 0141 287 0512; Think Tank, Birmingham ☎ 0121 202 2222, www.thinktanc.ac; Kendal Museum, Cumbria; ☎ 01539 733333, www.kendalmuseum.org.uk; Aberystwyth Arts Centre ☎ 01970 622887, www.aber.ac.uk/artscentre

» **LYNDSEY SELLEY** An exhibition of prints by the wildlife artist. 22-23 April: Great Fosters Hotel, Egham, Surrey. ☎ 01663 735026; www.wildlife-artist.com

EVENTS

» **EXPLOROCEAN** The opening of a new three-floor zone at Plymouth's aquarium, featuring a range of hands-on exhibits, including a climate lab and 3D theatre. National Marine Aquarium, Plymouth. Tickets start at £5.25. ☎ 01752 600301; www.national-aquarium.co.uk

» **EASTER AT COLCHESTER ZOO** A programme of activities for all the family, including a golden egg hunt and a chance to get involved with the 2006 Save the Rhino Campaign. 1-17 April: Colchester Zoo. ☎ 01206 331292; www.colchester-zoo.com

» **THE MAMMAL SOCIETY EASTER CONFERENCE**
The latest on British mammals with talks on water shrews, polecats, badgers, red squirrels, otters and more. 21-23 April: Queen's University, Belfast. ☎ 0207 350 2200; www.mammal.org.uk

» **DAISYCHAIN LIVE** A new indoor event giving the chance for traders, government bodies and community organisations to exhibit greener solutions for everyday life. 22-23 April: Three Counties Showground, Malvern. ☎ 01885 488168; www.organic-events.co.uk

» **PETRELS, PERMAFROST AND CLIMATE CHANGE**
Learn all about climate change at the latest Earthwatch lecture with experts Rob Thomas and Peter Kershaw. 27 April: Royal Geographical Society, London. ☎ 01865 318856; www.earthwatch.org

» **BLUEBELLS: EXPLORING BRITISH WILDLIFE**
An online survey organised by the Natural History Museum. Volunteers are needed to find, identify and record bluebells to document their distribution and

Picture credit