

'I remember being given a chick when I was three years old. I held it too tightly and it died.'

SIGOURNEY WEAVER starred as Dian Fossey in *Gorillas in the Mist* and is now honorary chair of the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund. In *Gorillas Revisited*, she returned to Rwanda for the first time in 20 years.

Interview by Sanjida O'Connell



Picture credit

What is your earliest nature-related childhood memory?

We raised chickens on the farm where I grew up, and I remember being given a chick when I was three years old. I was so afraid of dropping it, I held it too tightly and it died. I was so upset.

Who inspired your interest in nature and wildlife?

When I was at Stanford University, Jane Goodall came and spoke, and I thought what an amazing thing to do with one's life. The whole connection between us and apes is so fascinating.

When did you realise you wanted to become an actor?

Pretty late. I was too timid to say I wanted to be an actor until I was 27.

What was your first important job?

The world premier of John Guare's play, *Marco Polo Sings a Solo*, where I played a Swedish maid who cleans a glacier and gets impregnated from outer space by the President of the United States.

What's been your most extraordinary encounter with a wild animal?

I would have to say the mountain gorillas when we were making *Gorillas in the Mist*. Ziz, a 450lb silverback, got up from where he was resting and came and sat by me. I wasn't scared, I was astonished. I felt like Dian [Fossey] and the kind of joy she felt about gorillas coming close to her and accepting her presence.

Which location have you most enjoyed visiting?

Probably Rwanda.

What's your favourite holiday location?

I like physical vacations, I love to walk. My husband and I are always planning walking holidays.

What do you do to attract wildlife to your garden?

I don't have a garden. I live in New York but we have lots of birds around there. When you wake up to bird song in New York, that's something special.

Where in the UK do you most want to visit but haven't?

Scotland and Cornwall. My mother is English, so I have a genetic disposition to love England.

And worldwide?

South America, South Africa and India.

Who is your wildlife or natural history hero?

Birute Galdikas, Dian Fossey and Jane Goodall. Part of me really

If you were to come back as another species in your next life, what would it be?

Maybe I'll come back as a bunny, they are so beautiful. I could make an argument to come back as any species, but I don't think I'd make a good snake.



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envis their ability to live with great apes.

What's the most important thing you have done to reduce your impact on the environment?

At our house in the country, we have solar power – we're not on the grid at all – so we are aware of the electricity needed to read a book.

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Gorillas Revisited will be shown on Animal Planet on 11 June.

What's the local area where you go for contact with nature?
Central Park is one of the most beautiful areas, huge and not manicured. Just to go and sit there is a godsend, so I go to the park every chance I get.



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