

**You're narrating a show about Cecil the lion, who was killed by a trophy hunter...**

What's unusual about Cecil is that he was a lion that was known, through extensive research, for all of his life. He was satellite tagged. Satellite tags are very sophisticated now. They can tell you whether an animal is sleeping or grooming or digesting. Being large, robust mammals, lions can carry a quite heavy battery and tag so can transmit large amounts of data. Cecil was also an individual. He had a personality.

**He looks huge.**

I've heard it said that he was the largest lion in Africa but just about every game reserve you go to in Africa will tell you they've got the largest lion in Africa. He was also a black mane male



Magnificent: Cecil the Lion

# SIXTY SECONDS

With Chris Packham

and from a human perspective, they look magnificent. So he was very well known, very much loved and very well studied. Then he was lured out of the

reserve in Zimbabwe, where he was protected, on to a property where he was a victim of trophy hunting.

**What are your feelings about trophy hunting?**  
Trophy hunting is enormously

THE NATURALIST TV PRESENTER, 59, ON TROPHY HUNTING, FACING DOWN A LION AND WORKING WITH MEGAN, HIS STEPDAUGHTER

INTERVIEW BY PAUL SIMPER



divisive. There's little middle ground. The problem, I think, is that in a world where we know that we have lost 70 per cent of the world's wildlife since 1970 and there is enormous pressure on large predators - tigers, lions, leopards, polar bears are all in decline because of a lack of habitat and the human/wildlife conflict - people killing them solely for pleasure is so unequivocally unethical that even if you were to present to people a cast-iron case for trophy hunting being beneficial to conservation, they would find it very difficult to support it.

**Why is it important to tell Cecil's story five years after his death?**

Nothing has changed. You can still import trophies into the UK. We know that there are UK-based trophy hunters who go out and kill animals in Africa and bring back their trophies, and that's legal. So I think this film being released keeps the debate in the public's mind. The global uproar when Cecil was killed was phenomenal. I remember looking on Google about ten days after the news broke and there were 220 million pages with Cecil mentioned on them.

**A big male lion will cover 100m in just under five seconds but I got some great photos**

**Is it true a lion charged you?**

Yes, on several occasions. I wanted to try and photograph it. I'd seen some old photographs by a famous 1960s photographer, Peter Beard, who lived in Kenya, of a lion charging him. There's a difference between a lion looking a bit menacing and one that's coming at you to kill you. They would only charge once or twice and then pull up from about ten metres away in a cloud of dust. They stamp around growling. It's all pretty hectic. A big male lion will cover 100m in just under five seconds but I got some great photos.

**How did you feel?**

I was in the moment of trying to work a camera so I wasn't really thinking too much about it. But for the people around me who were looking after me, they needed balls of steel.

**How vital have wildlife TV shows been in lockdown?**

My stepdaughter Megs and I set up the Self-Isolating Bird Club online in the spring and we got an enormous amount of traffic from people. I got a bag of Christmas cards addressed to 'Chris Packham, New Forest' this year, the likes of which I've never had. I'm humbled to say many of them just said, 'Thank you. I live in a flat on my own. I so look forward to you just telling me about blackbirds and daisies.' People are essentially locked in. With Winterwatch, the wildlife is still out there. We're able to beam it into

people's homes and they do find respite and solace in nature.

**You and Megan work very well together on Winterwatch...**

Yeah, we enjoy it. We know each other really well. We can take the mick and no one is going to cry. Megs is capable and bright and reads the scripts and makes the notes and does all the things that I probably don't do quite as diligently.

**What positives have there been for you from lockdown?**

Megs, Charlotte, my partner, and I are bubbling in the New Forest. Because I wasn't going away working at all I was able to see spring and summer every day consecutively for the first time since I was a teenager.

**Have your dogs Sid and Nancy loved having you home more as well?**

Aw, yeah. I lost my poodles, Itch and Scratch, and then we got Sid and Nancy straight away. I like them, obviously, but you have to get to know them to love them. Then, one morning during lockdown, they jumped up on my bed and I thought, 'Oh blimey, I've fallen in love with these dogs.'

**Where is the place outdoors that you are happiest?**

In the woods where we are for Winterwatch. No question.



Diligent co-star: Megan McCubbin

Packham narrates Cecil: The Lion King, airing as part of National Geographic Wild's Big Cat Week, from today