

= Steve Irwin =

Stephen Robert " Steve " Irwin ( 22 February 1962 ? 4 September 2006 ) , nicknamed " The Crocodile Hunter " , was an Australian wildlife expert , television personality , and conservationist . Irwin achieved worldwide fame from the television series The Crocodile Hunter , an internationally broadcast wildlife documentary series which he co @-@ hosted with his wife Terri . Together , the couple also owned and operated Australia Zoo , founded by Irwin 's parents in Beerwah , about 80 kilometres ( 50 mi ) north of the Queensland state capital city of Brisbane .

Irwin died on 4 September 2006 after being pierced in the chest by a stingray barb while filming an underwater documentary film titled Ocean 's Deadliest . The Sea Shepherd Conservation Society ship MY Steve Irwin was named in his honour .

= = Early life = =

Irwin was born on his mother 's birthday to Lyn and Bob Irwin in Essendon , a suburb of Melbourne , Victoria . He is of Irish descent on his father 's side . He moved with his parents as a child to Queensland in 1970 , where he attended Landsborough State School and Caloundra State High School . Irwin described his father as a wildlife expert interested in herpetology , while his mother Lyn was a wildlife rehabilitator . After moving to Queensland , Bob and Lyn Irwin started the small Queensland Reptile and Fauna Park , where Steve grew up around crocodiles and other reptiles .

Irwin became involved with the park in a number of ways , including taking part in daily animal feeding , as well as care and maintenance activities . On his sixth birthday , he was given a 12 @-@ foot ( 4 m ) scrub python . He began handling crocodiles at the age of nine after his father had educated him on reptiles from an early age . Also at age nine , he wrestled his first crocodile , again under his father 's supervision . He worked as a volunteer for Queensland 's East Coast Crocodile Management program and captured over 100 crocodiles , some of which were relocated , while others were housed at the family park . Irwin took over the management of the park in 1991 and renamed it Australia Zoo in 1992 .

= = Career = =

= = = Marriage and family = = =

In 1991 , Irwin met Terri Raines , an American naturalist from Eugene , Oregon , who was visiting wildlife rehabilitation facilities in Australia and had decided to visit the zoo . According to the couple , it was love at first sight . Terri said at the time , " I thought there was no one like this anywhere in the world . He sounded like an environmental Tarzan , a larger @-@ than @-@ life superhero guy . " They were engaged four months later and were married in Eugene on 4 June 1992 . Together they had two children : a daughter , Bindi Sue Irwin ( born 24 July 1998 ) , and a son , Robert Clarence " Bob " ( named after Irwin 's father ) Irwin ( born 1 December 2003 ) . Bindi Sue is jointly named after two of Steve Irwin 's favourite animals : Bindi , a saltwater crocodile , and Sui , a Staffordshire Bull Terrier who died on 23 June 2004 . Irwin was as enthusiastic about his family as he was about his work . He once described his daughter Bindi as " the reason [ he ] was put on the Earth . " His wife once said , " The only thing that could ever keep him away from the animals he loves are the people he loves even more . " Although the Irwins were happily married , they did not wear wedding rings ; they believed that in their line of work , wearing jewellery could pose a hazard to them and / or the animals .

= = = The Crocodile Hunter and related work = = =

Steve and Terri spent their honeymoon trapping crocodiles together . Film footage of their honeymoon , taken by John Stainton , became the first episode of The Crocodile Hunter . The series

debuted on Australian TV screens in 1996 , and made its way onto North American television the following year . The Crocodile Hunter became successful in the United States , the UK , and over 130 other countries , reaching 500 million people . Irwin 's exuberant and enthusiastic presenting style , broad Australian accent , signature khaki shorts , and catchphrase " Crikey ! " became known worldwide . Sir David Attenborough praised Irwin for introducing many to the natural world , saying " He taught them how wonderful and exciting it was , he was a born communicator . "

American satellite and cable television channel Animal Planet ended The Crocodile Hunter with a series finale titled " Steve 's Last Adventure . " The last Crocodile Hunter documentary spanned three hours with footage of Irwin 's across @-@ the @-@ world adventure in locations including the Himalayas , the Yangtze River , Borneo , and the Kruger National Park . Irwin went on to star in other Animal Planet documentaries , including Croc Files , The Crocodile Hunter Diaries , and New Breed Vets . During a January 2006 interview on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno , Irwin announced that Discovery Kids would be developing a show for his daughter , Bindi Sue Irwin ? a plan realised after his death as the series Bindi the Jungle Girl .

= = = Other television and film work = = =

In 1998 , Irwin continued , working with director Mark Strickson , to present The Ten Deadliest Snakes in the World . He appeared on several episodes of The Tonight Show with Jay Leno . A 2000 FedEx commercial with Irwin lightheartedly dealt with the possibility of occupational death from snakebite and the fanciful notion that FedEx would have saved him , if only FedEx were used .

Under Irwin 's leadership , the operations grew to include the zoo , the television series , the Steve Irwin Conservation Foundation ( later renamed Wildlife Warriors ) , and the International Crocodile Rescue . Improvements to the Australia Zoo include the Animal Planet Crocoseum , the rainforest aviary and Tiger Temple . Irwin mentioned that he was considering opening an Australia Zoo in Las Vegas , Nevada , and possibly at other sites around the world .

In 2001 , Irwin appeared in a cameo role in the Eddie Murphy film Dr. Dolittle 2 , in which an alligator warns Dolittle that he knows Irwin is going to grab him and is prepared to attack when he does , but Dolittle fails to warn Irwin in time . Irwin 's only starring feature film role was in 2002 's The Crocodile Hunter : Collision Course , which was released to mixed reviews . In the film Irwin ( who portrayed himself and performed numerous stunts ) mistakes some CIA agents for poachers . He sets out to stop them from capturing a crocodile , which , unknown to him , has actually swallowed a tracking transmitter . The film won the Best Family Feature Film award for a comedy film at the Young Artist Awards . The film was produced on a budget of about US \$ 12 million , and has grossed \$ 33 million . To promote the film , Irwin was featured in an animated short produced by Animax Entertainment for Intermix .

In 2002 , Irwin and his family appeared in the Wiggles video / DVD release Wiggly Safari , which was set in Australia Zoo and featured singing and dancing inspired by Australian wildlife .

In 2003 , Irwin fronted an advertising campaign for The Ghan , a passenger train operating between Adelaide , Alice Springs , and Darwin . A Pacific National NR class locomotive was named Steve Irwin as part of the campaign .

In 2005 , Irwin provided his voice for the 2006 animated film Happy Feet , as an elephant seal named Trev . The film was dedicated to Irwin , as he died during post @-@ production . Another , previously incomplete scene , featuring Irwin providing the voice of an albatross and essentially playing himself , was restored to the DVD release .

= = = Media campaigns = = =

Irwin was also involved in several media campaigns . He enthusiastically joined with the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service to promote Australia 's strict quarantine / customs requirements , with advertisements and posters featuring slogans such as , " Quarantine Matters ! Don 't muck with it " . His payments for these advertising campaigns were directed into his wildlife fund .

In 2004 , Irwin was appointed ambassador for The Ghan , the passenger train running from

Adelaide to Alice Springs in the central Australian outback , when the line was extended all the way to Darwin on the northern coast that year . For some time he was sponsored by Toyota .

Irwin was a keen promoter for Australian tourism in general and Queensland tourism in particular . In 2002 , the Australia Zoo was voted Queensland 's top tourist attraction . His immense popularity in the United States meant he often promoted Australia as a tourist destination there . As a part of the United States ' " Australia Week " celebrations in January 2006 , Irwin appeared at UCLA 's Pauley Pavilion in Los Angeles , California .

= = = Search and rescue in Mexico = = =

In November 2003 , Irwin was filming a documentary on sea lions off the coast of Baja California Peninsula in Mexico when he heard via his boat 's radio that two scuba divers were reported missing in the area . Irwin and his entire crew suspended operations to aid in the search . His team 's divers searched with the rescue divers , and Irwin used his vessel to patrol the waters around the island where the incident occurred , as well as using his satellite communications system to call in a rescue plane . On the second day of the search , kayakers found one of the divers , Scott Jones , perched on a narrow rock ledge jutting out from the side of a cliff . Irwin and a crew member escorted him to Irwin 's boat . Jones did not recognise Irwin . The other lost diver , Katie Vrooman , was found dead by a search plane later the same day not far from Jones ' location .

= = Honours = =

In 1997 , while on a fishing trip on the coast of Queensland with his father , Irwin discovered a new species of turtle . Later given the honour of naming the newly discovered species , he named it Irwin 's turtle ( *Elseya irwini* ) after his family . Another newly discovered Australian animal ? a species of air @-@ breathing land snail , *Crikey steveirwini* , was named after Irwin in 2009 .

In 2001 , Irwin was awarded the Centenary Medal by the Australian government for his " service to global conservation and to Australian tourism " . In 2004 , he was recognised as Tourism Export of the Year . He was also nominated in 2004 for Australian of the Year ? an honour which was won that year by Australian cricket captain Steve Waugh . Shortly before his death , Irwin was to be named an adjunct professor at the University of Queensland 's School of Integrative Biology . On 14 November 2007 , Irwin was awarded the adjunct professorship posthumously .

In May 2007 , the government of Rwanda announced that it would name a baby gorilla after Irwin as a tribute to his work in wildlife conservation . Also in 2007 , the state government of Kerala , India named the Crocodile Rehabilitation and Research Centre at Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary in his honour ; however , Terri objected that this action had been taken without her permission and asked the Kerala government in 2009 to stop using Irwin 's name and images ? a request which the state government complied with in mid @-@ 2009 .

= = Environmentalism = =

Irwin was a passionate conservationist and believed in promoting environmentalism by sharing his excitement about the natural world rather than preaching to people . He was concerned with conservation of endangered animals and land clearing leading to loss of habitat . He considered conservation to be the most important part of his work : " I consider myself a wildlife warrior . My mission is to save the world 's endangered species . " Irwin bought " large tracts of land " in Australia , Vanuatu , Fiji and the United States , which he described as " like national parks " and stressed the importance of people realising that they could each make a difference .

Irwin founded the Steve Irwin Conservation Foundation , which became an independent charity and was later renamed " Wildlife Warriors Worldwide " . He also helped found International Crocodile Rescue , the Lyn Irwin Memorial Fund ( named in memory of his mother , who died in an automobile crash in 2000 ) , and the Iron Bark Station Wildlife Rehabilitation Facility .

Irwin urged people to take part in considerate tourism and not support illegal poaching through the

purchase of items such as turtle shells or shark @-@ fin soup .

Sir David Attenborough was an inspiration to Irwin , according to his widow . When presenting a Lifetime Achievement Award to Attenborough after Irwin 's death at the British National Television Awards on 31 October 2006 , Terri Irwin said , " If there 's one person who directly inspired my husband it 's the person being honoured tonight .... [ Steve 's ] real , true love was conservation ? and the influence of tonight 's recipient in preserving the natural world has been immense . " Attenborough reciprocated by praising Irwin for introducing many to the natural world , saying , " He taught them how wonderful and exciting it was , he was a born communicator . "

Irwin , after his death , was described by Mark Townend , CEO of RSPCA Queensland , as a " modern @-@ day Noah . " British naturalist David Bellamy lauded his skills as a natural historian and media performer . Canadian environmentalist David Suzuki paid tribute to Irwin , noting that " [ h ] umanity will not protect that which we fear or do not understand . Steve Irwin helped us understand those things that many people thought were a nuisance at best , a horror at worst . That made him a great educator and conservationist . "

After his death , the vessel MV Robert Hunter owned by the environmental action group Sea Shepherd Conservation Society was renamed MY Steve Irwin . Shortly before his death , Irwin had been investigating joining Sea Shepherd 's 2007 ? 2008 voyage to Antarctica to disrupt Japanese whaling activity . Following his death , the organisation suggested renaming their vessel , and this idea was endorsed by Terri Irwin . Regarding the ship and its new name , Terri said , " If Steve were alive , he 'd be aboard with them ! "

= = Sporting activities = =

Irwin loved mixed martial arts competitions and trained with Greg Jackson in the fighting / grappling system of Gaidojutsu .

Like many Australians , he was an avid cricket fan . This was seen during his visit to Sri Lanka where he played cricket with some local children and said " I love cricket " and " It 's a shame we have to go catch some snakes now " . This was seen during the Crocodile Hunter episode " Island of the Snakes " .

Having grown up in Essendon , Irwin was a fan of the Essendon Bombers , an Australian rules football club in the Australian Football League . Irwin took part in an Australian Rules football promotion in Los Angeles as part of " Australia Week " in early 2006 . After his death , a picture of Irwin wearing a Bombers Guernsey was shown by ESPN.com in their Bottom 10 ranking of the worst Division I FBS college football teams after Week 1 of the season in tribute to him .

Having lived in Queensland most of his life , Irwin was also a fan of rugby league . As a teenager , he played for the Caloundra Sharks as a second @-@ rower , and as an adult he was known to be a passionate Brisbane Broncos fan and was involved with the club on several occasions . On one occasion after turning up to training he asked if he could tackle the largest player , Shane Webcke . Despite being thrown to the ground and looking like he 'd been crushed he was jovial about the experience . Irwin laughingly shared the experience with the Queensland State of Origin squad before the 2006 series . Irwin also supported rugby union , being a fan of the national team , the Wallabies . He once wore a Wallaby jersey during a demonstration at the zoo . A behind @-@ the @-@ scenes episode of The Crocodile Hunter showed Irwin and the crew finding a petrol station in a remote part of Namibia to watch the Wallabies defeat France in the 1999 Rugby World Cup Final . Irwin was also a talented surfer .

= = Controversies = =

A controversial incident occurred during a public show on 2 January 2004 , when Irwin carried his one @-@ month @-@ old son , Bob , in his arm while hand @-@ feeding a chicken carcass to Murray , a 3 @.@ 8 @-@ metre ( 12 ft 6 in ) saltwater crocodile . The infant was close to the crocodile , and comparisons were made in the press to Michael Jackson 's dangling his son outside a German hotel window . In addition , some child welfare groups , animal rights groups , and some

of Irwin 's television viewers criticised his actions as irresponsible and tantamount to child abuse . Irwin apologised on the US NBC show Today . Both he and his wife publicly stated that Irwin was in complete control of the situation , as he had dealt with crocodiles since he was a small child , and based on his lifetime of experience neither he nor his son was in any danger . He also showed footage of the event shot from a different angle , demonstrating that they were much farther from the crocodile than they had appeared in the publicised clip . Terri Irwin said their child was in no more danger than one being taught to swim . No charges were filed ; according to one journalist , Irwin told officials he would not repeat the action . The incident prompted the Queensland government to change its crocodile @-@ handling laws , banning children and untrained adults from entering crocodile enclosures .

In June 2004 , allegations were made that he disturbed wildlife ( namely whales , seals and penguins ) while filming a documentary , Ice Breaker , in Antarctica . The matter was subsequently closed without charges being laid .

After questions arose in 2003 about Irwin being paid \$ 175 @,@ 000 worth of taxpayers ' money to appear in a television advertisement and his possible political ties , Irwin told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation ( ABC ) that he was a conservationist and did not choose sides in politics . His comments describing Australian Prime Minister John Howard as the " greatest leader in the world " earned him scorn in the media .

Irwin was criticised for having an unsophisticated view of conservation in Australia that seemed more linked to tourism than to the problems Australia faces as a continent . In response to questions of Australia 's problems with overgrazing , salinity , and erosion , Irwin responded , " Cows have been on our land for so long that Australia has evolved to handle those big animals . " The Sydney Morning Herald concluded with the opinion that his message was confusing and amounted to " eating roos and crocs is bad for tourism , and therefore more cruel than eating other animals " .

Criticism of Irwin 's career following his death came from Dan Mathews , vice @-@ president of the animal rights group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals . Comparing Irwin to a " cheap reality TV star " , Mathews accused him of " antagonising frightened wild animals ... a very dangerous message to send to children " , contrasted his methods with the behaviour of " a responsible conservationist like Jacques Cousteau " , and said it was " no shock at all that Steve Irwin should die provoking a dangerous animal . " The son of Jacques Cousteau , Jean @-@ Michel Cousteau ? also a producer of wildlife documentaries ? took issue with Irwin 's " very , very spectacular , dramatic way of presenting things " and suggested instead that " You don 't touch nature , you just look at it . " Jacques Cousteau 's grandson and Jean @-@ Michel 's nephew , Philippe Cousteau , Jr . , on the other hand , called Irwin " a remarkable individual " ; describing the Ocean 's Deadliest project ( on which he worked along with Irwin ) , Philippe said , " I think why Steve was so excited about it that we were looking at these animals that people think of as , you know , dangerous and deadly monsters , and they 're not . They all have an important place in the environment and in the world . And that was what his whole message was about . "

= = Death = =

On 4 September 2006 Irwin was on location at Batt Reef , near Port Douglas , Queensland , taking part in the production of the documentary series Ocean 's Deadliest . During a lull in filming caused by inclement weather , Irwin decided to snorkel in shallow waters while being filmed in an effort to provide footage for his daughter 's television programme .

While swimming in chest @-@ deep water , Irwin approached a stingray with an approximate span of two metres ( 6 @. @ 5 ft ) from the rear , in order to film it swimming away .

According to the incident 's only witness , ? All of a sudden [ the stingray ] propped on its front and started stabbing wildly with its tail . Hundreds of strikes in a few seconds ? . Irwin initially believed he only had a punctured lung ; the stingray 's barb pierced his heart , causing him to bleed to death . The stingray 's behaviour appeared to have been a defensive response to being boxed in . Crew members aboard Irwin 's boat administered CPR and rushed him to shore . Medical staff pronounced him dead at the scene .

Irwin 's death is believed to be the only fatality from a stingray ever captured on video .

Footage of the incident was viewed by Queensland state police as part their mandatory investigations . All copies of the footage were then destroyed at the behest of Irwin 's family . Production was completed on Ocean 's Deadliest , which was broadcast in the US on the Discovery Channel on 21 January 2007 . The documentary was completed with footage shot in the weeks following the accident , but without including any mention of Irwin 's accidental death .

= = = Reactions = = =

News of Irwin 's death prompted reactions around the world . Then @-@ Prime Minister John Howard expressed " shock and distress " at the death , saying that " Australia has lost a wonderful and colourful son . " Queensland 's then @-@ Premier Peter Beattie remarked that Irwin would " be remembered as not just a great Queenslander , but a great Australian " . The Australian federal parliament opened on 5 September 2006 with condolence speeches by both Howard and the Leader of the Opposition , Kim Beazley . Flags at the Sydney Harbour Bridge were lowered to half mast in honour of Irwin . In the days following Irwin 's death , reactions dominated Australian online news sources , talk @-@ back radio programmes , and television networks . In the United States , where Irwin had appeared in over 200 Discovery Network television programmes , special tributes appeared on the Animal Planet channel , as well as on CNN and major TV talk shows . Thousands of Irwin 's fans visited Australia Zoo after his death , paying their respects and bringing flowers , candles , stuffed animals and messages of support .

In the weeks following Irwin 's death , at least ten stingrays were found dead and mutilated on the beaches of Queensland , with their tails cut off , prompting speculation as to whether they might have been killed by fans of Irwin as an act of revenge , although , according to the chairman of the Queensland fishing information service , anglers regularly cut the tails off accidentally caught stingrays to avoid being stung . Michael Hornby , a friend of Irwin and executive director of his Wildlife Warrior fund , condemned any revenge killings , saying that " We just want to make it very clear that we will not accept and not stand for anyone who 's taken a form of retribution . That 's the last thing Steve would want . "

= = = Funeral and memorial services = = =

Family and friends of Irwin held a private funeral service in Caloundra on 9 September 2006 . Irwin was buried in a private ceremony at Australia Zoo later that same day ; the grave site is inaccessible to the zoo 's visitors . Prime Minister Howard and Queensland Premier Beattie had offered to hold a state funeral , but Irwin 's family decided this would not be appropriate and ? in the words of his father ? he would have preferred to be remembered as an " ordinary bloke " .

On 20 September , a public memorial service , introduced by Russell Crowe , was held in Australia Zoo 's 5 @, @ 500 @-@ seat Crocoseum ; this service was broadcast live throughout Australia , the United States , the UK , Germany , and Asia , and it is estimated to have been seen by over 300 million viewers worldwide . The memorial included remarks by Prime Minister Howard ; Irwin 's father Bob and daughter Bindi ; his associates Wes Mannion and John Stainton ; and celebrities from Australia and around the world . Anthony Field of The Wiggles partly hosted the service , often sharing the screen with various animals , from koalas to elephants . Australian music star John Williamson sang " True Blue " , which was Irwin 's favourite song . In a symbolic finish to the service , Irwin 's truck was loaded up with gear and driven out of the arena for the last time as Williamson sang . As a final tribute , Australia Zoo staff spelled out Irwin 's catchphrase " Crikey " in yellow flowers as Irwin 's truck was driven from the Crocoseum for the last time to end the service .

= = Related events = =

On 1 January 2007 , Glass House Mountains Road , the road that runs by the Australia Zoo , was officially renamed Steve Irwin Way .

The Australian government announced in July 2007 that a 135 000 hectare ( 334 000 acre ) national park was being created in northern Queensland and would be named the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve .

An asteroid discovered in 2001 has been named 57567 Crikey in honour of Irwin and his " signature phrase " .

= = Filmography = =