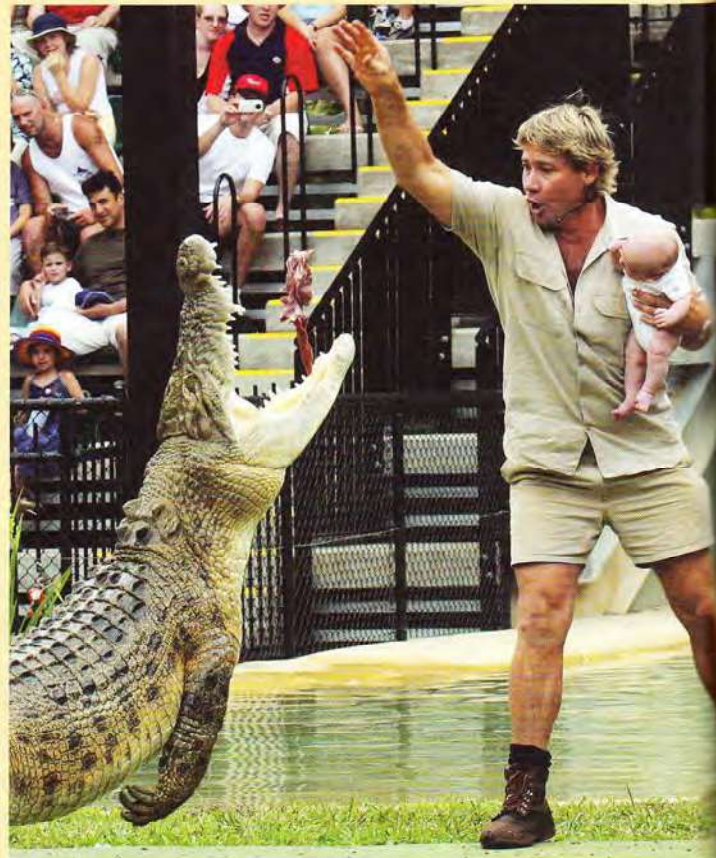


- 1 **SPEAKING** Work in pairs. Describe what is happening in the photo. Why is the man acting in this way, do you think? What do you think of his behaviour?
- 2 **SPEAKING** Work in pairs. Answer the questions.
  - 1 Do you enjoy watching wildlife programmes on TV? What do/don't you like about them?
  - 2 Would you enjoy seeing a show like the one in the photo at a wildlife park? Why?/Why not?
- 3 Read the text, ignoring the gaps.
  - 1 How did Steve Irwin die?
  - 2 How did he become rich?
  - 3 What business did he take over when his parents retired?
- 4 Match sentences A–H with gaps 1–7 in the text. There is one sentence that you do not need.
  - A But the 44-year-old, who is believed to have suffered an instant cardiac arrest, was pronounced dead by medical staff at about noon local time.
  - B It's a shame that audiences need that to be attracted to wildlife.
  - C Although Irwin was one of Australia's most successful exports, he provoked mixed feelings at home.
  - D A theme park famous around the world, it has more than 1,000 animals on 60 acres of bushland and employs 360 people.
  - E He appeared to have no fear.
  - F In spite of this, Irwin's death was reported widely in the press and on TV.
  - G Irrepressibly ebullient, he thrived on his death-defying encounters with wildlife.
  - H He simply could not understand what the fuss was about.
- 5 Answer the questions.
  - 1 Why were people surprised that Irwin had been killed by a stingray?
  - 2 How did he react when people criticised him for exposing his baby son to danger?
  - 3 Why did many Australians have mixed feelings about Irwin?
  - 4 Why did some people object to Irwin's television programmes?
- 6 Choose the correct verbs to complete these collocations from the text and the sentences in exercise 4.
  - 1 provoke / spark off mixed feelings
  - 2 drop / shake off an image
  - 3 take / make a risk
  - 4 acquire / take fame and fortune
  - 5 laugh off / laugh an incident
  - 6 announce / pronounce somebody dead
  - 7 take out / take over a business
  - 8 administer / issue a heart massage
  - 9 create / cause pain

## Steve Irwin



### VOCABULARY BUILDER 5.2: VERB-NOUN COLLOCATIONS: WORKBOOK PAGE 104

- 7 Explain the meaning of these sentences.
  - 1 Steve Irwin was a man in tune with his surroundings. (line 3)
  - 2 Nothing fazed him. (line 9)
  - 3 And it was, perhaps, that sense of invulnerability that killed him. (line 14)
  - 4 Animals were in Irwin's blood. (line 31)
  - 5 He was a natural showman. (line 57)
  - 6 I get called an adrenaline junkie. (line 78)
- 8 **SPEAKING** Work in pairs. Discuss the questions. Justify your opinions.
  - 1 Do you admire Steve Irwin?
  - 2 Do you agree that TV has become 'gladiatorial and voyeuristic'?
  - 3 Do you agree that 'some things in nature should be left alone'?



Unlike most Australians, who shrink from the tropical sun and shudder at the dangerous creatures that surround them, Steve Irwin was a man in tune with his surroundings. A true environmental warrior and lifelong animal rights advocate, he founded Wildlife Warriors Worldwide, which protects habitat and wildlife, sets up breeding and rescue programmes for endangered species, and leads scientific research to aid conservation.

Nothing fazed him – not the sharks or killer jellyfish, nor the man-eating crocodiles, nor the dozens of snakes and spiders capable of delivering a fatal bite. For Irwin, Australia's animals were 'like a magnet', and he acquired fame, and considerable fortune, by getting up close to them.<sup>1</sup> And it was, perhaps, that sense of invulnerability that killed him.

The warrior who wrestled crocodiles and handled pythons without a scratch was diving in the warm waters of Queensland's Great Barrier Reef when a stingray shot its poisonous barb into his heart. According to a witness, Irwin swam too close to it. Triangular-shaped stingrays, which glide through the water on their wide, flat bodies, are usually placid, lashing out with their long tails only when they feel threatened or are trodden on. Irwin was believed to be only the third person killed by a stingray in Australian waters.

Irwin, whose television show *Crocodile Hunter* made him an international celebrity and a superstar in America, was filming an underwater sequence for a documentary called *Ocean's Deadliest* at the remote Batt Reef. The crew of his boat called the emergency services and administered heart massage as they rushed to a nearby island to meet a rescue helicopter.<sup>2</sup>

Animals were in Irwin's blood. At the age of six he was given a four-metre python for his birthday. When he was eight, his father, Bob, a plumber with a passion for reptiles, moved the family from Melbourne to Queensland's Sunshine Coast, where they opened a small wildlife park. By the time Irwin was nine, he was catching crocodiles, and in his twenties he worked for the Queensland government as a crocodile trapper, removing problem animals from populated areas. In 1991, when his parents retired, he took over the business – originally called the Queensland Reptile and Fauna Park, and now known as Australia Zoo – and developed it into a major tourist attraction.<sup>3</sup>

Irwin told the ABC documentary: 'I've got animals so genetically inside me that there's no way I could actually be anything else.' Visitors came in droves to Australia Zoo to watch Irwin hover perilously close to untethered crocodiles, often leaping on to their backs. But in 2004 he went too far,

cradling his baby son, Bob, in one arm while feeding a large, snapping crocodile with the other; there was an uproar and

Irwin apologised. He later insisted, however, that boy had been in no danger, and in later interviews laughed off the incident.<sup>4</sup> It was all about 'perceived danger' he said, claiming that 'in front of that crocodile I was in complete control, absolute and complete control.' One commentator blamed his death on the demands of an increasingly voyeuristic brand of television. But Irwin was only doing what had come naturally. He was a natural showman.<sup>5</sup>

The British television presenter and survival expert, Ray Mears, said his death proved that 'some things in nature should be left alone'. He said of Irwin: 'He clearly took a lot of risks, and television encouraged him to do that.'

You leave dangerous animals alone because they will defend themselves.' Mears, too, condemned some wildlife programmes as 'voyeuristic', saying: 'Television has become very gladiatorial, and it's not healthy. The voyeurism we are seeing on television has a cost, and it's that cost Steve Irwin's family are paying now.' However, scientists who study stingrays say that Irwin was extremely unlucky. Unprovoked attacks are virtually unheard of, and although a stingray's venom will cause agonising pain, it is rarely fatal.

Like Kylie Minogue, he was not taken entirely seriously in Australia, and appeared to be more valued abroad. Urban Aussies want to shake off the image embodied by the brash, blond Irwin, and to have their modern, multicultural nation portrayed overseas in a rather more sophisticated fashion. Whatever one thought of Irwin, his passion for life could not be denied, nor the 100 per cent enthusiasm that he brought to everything he did. 'I get called an adrenaline junkie every other minute, and I'm just fine with that,' he once remarked. On another occasion, he claimed never to have experienced 'fear of losing my life'.

