



FIRST LADY

Julia Bradbury shares her favourite unforgettable wildlife moments from years spent touring both in the UK and abroad



A dolphin breaches in the Moray Firth



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in the grounds of Warwick Castle. It was all very Game of Thrones, but we were hoping to get a peaceful night spent in the shadow of the castle. I hadn't reckoned on the resident peacocks, who treated us all to the rudest awakening at some ungodly hour of the morning. There were definitely expletives uttered but their sharp trilling call has certainly stuck in my memory.

I don't know if it's just me, but I've had one or two scrapes with birdlife down the years. I've been divebombed by Arctic terns on the Farne Islands in Northumberland, and when I was in Australia recently for my latest series we found ourselves sharing a campsite - on Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbour - with some very vocal and territorial nesting seagulls. They have an incredibly loud screech, and one in particular was very peeved by the TV cameras. Can't blame him. Looking out for his bird.


One of my favourite places to get close quarters with wildlife is in the New Forest, where you are sharing a space with wild ponies, deer and badger, and lots of other native species. The Club's Camping in the Forest sites are a great way to get in the thick of it.

There have been some more extreme encounters too. In South Africa I've been pitched up on safari when the roar of a lion or wildebeest comes travelling into camp. It's a frightening but exciting experience, but admittedly the sounds can travel for miles so you never know how far away the animal is.

But above all, one animal stands out for me - it's a dolphin, named Zephyr. We spotted him breaching in the Moray Firth at Chanonry Point, very close to the Club's Rosemarkie Club Site.

His playful antics were lovely to watch. Not long afterwards, I was sent a photo of Zephyr by photographer Charlie Phillips. This photo is now framed on my son's bedroom wall. He's also called Zephyr. It's such a lovely memento, and one that reminds me of how wonderful the wildlife is all around the UK. You don't have to travel halfway across the world to see some of the planet's most beautiful and endearing creatures.

Camping is a great way to get close to this wildlife, but always remember to respect it and cherish it at all times.

Enjoy your travels. 

ON ANOTHER NOTE...

I wanted to add a word of congratulations to Volkswagen, after the Arteon was named overall winner in the Club's 13th annual Tow Car Awards. It's the first time VW has taken the top spot since 2015, when the Passat Estate took the honours.

However, what's notable about this year's judging is that it was the first time a fully electric car had been included in the testing. The introduction of the Jaguar i-Pace, one of the first electric cars to be able to tow at all, is great news for the future sustainability of driving and let's hope it's a sign of things to come for those who tow a trailer.

I vividly remember the day. It was a gorgeous hazy morning in North Wales, and I was on tenterhooks as I joined Jess from the Anglesey Sea Zoo Conservation Centre to release two baby lobsters back into the sea.

These tiny critters are given the best possible start in life at the Sea Zoo before being released a few months later in a project that aims to boost lobster populations in the area following overfishing. If they make it, they can live to anywhere between 45 and 70 years old. Not bad for a crustacean!

My little lobster friend (who I nicknamed Lazarus) scooted nervously out of the bucket and hopefully he's now swimming happily around in the Menai Strait. As an ambassador for the Marine Conservation Society, I'm only too aware of the fragility of the eco-system in which these creatures exist. Their habitats are of vital importance and I'm keen to do anything I can to spread the word and help these marine animals around the world. I only hope it will be of benefit to them.

Over many years working in television this is one of many fond memories I have of engaging with wildlife and learning more about the amazing fauna we have around the UK.

When I first started working with the Club, before I became its President, I remember camping in some fabulous medieval-style tents