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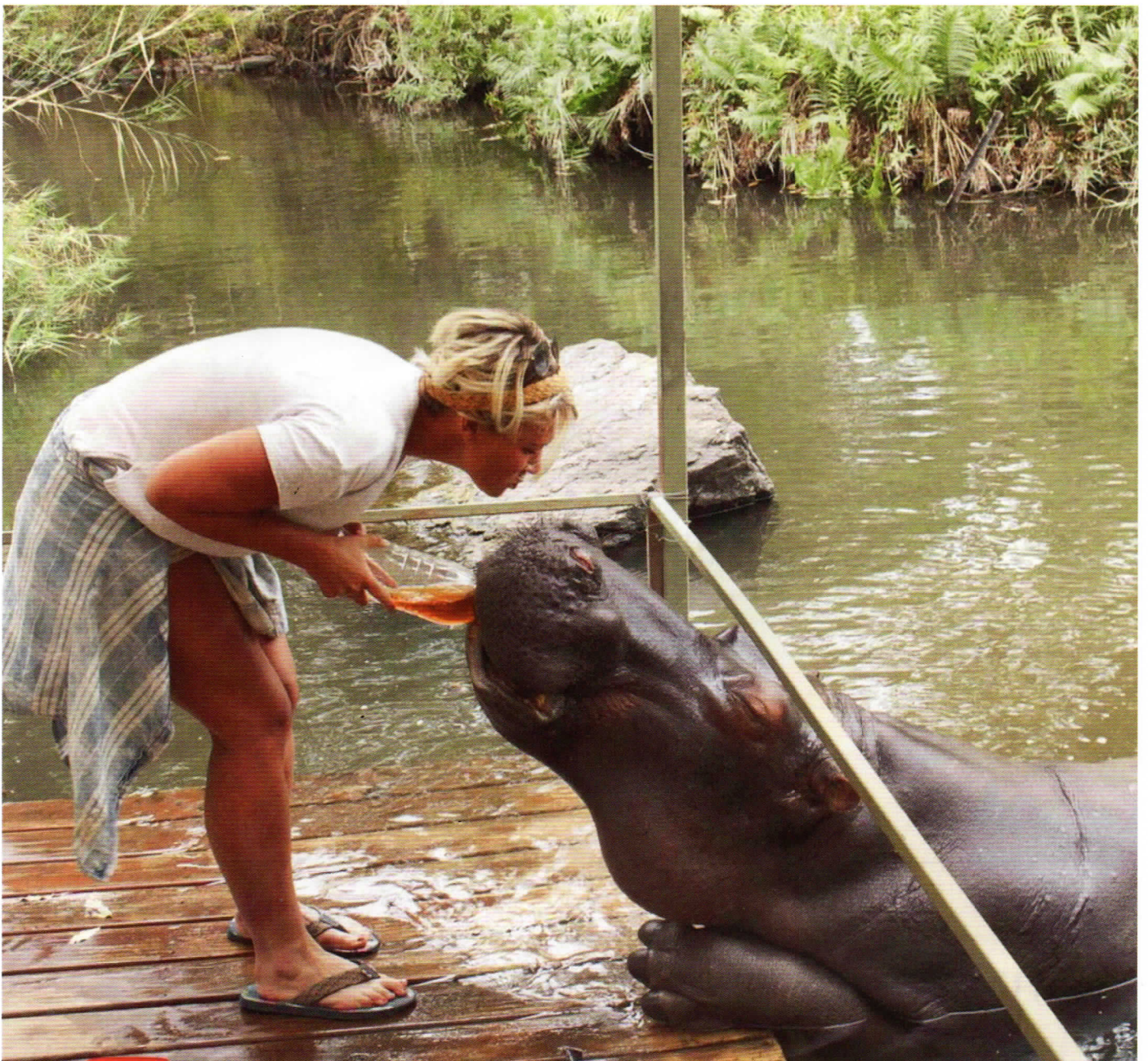
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Sarah Roberts – A Story in Pictures

by Andrew Harris

The wildlife of our planet need people like Sarah Roberts to speak for them as they can't speak for themselves. Homo sapiens behave as if they own the planet and can do what they like regardless of how it affects other species. Sarah combines a scientific background with the campaigning instincts of a journalist to provide a wake-up call. Let us do something to preserve our planet as a habitat for all species – not just our own.

Sarah Roberts is a Lancashire lass – born in Preston – who studied Animal

Behaviour at the University of Central Lancashire and graduated with a first class honours degree in the subject in 2012. Since then she has eschewed normal jobs in favour of a life of adventure and research in remote parts of the world such as southern Africa, western Canada and the islands of Indonesia in the Pacific.

From animal tracking in the bush to grizzly bear guiding in a rainforest, the more Sarah explored the more she noticed the disconnect between the world of science and that of other

people with their understandable preoccupation with family, finance and fun. Sarah became a campaigning eco-journalist and has a story to tell behind and in front of the camera.

Sarah's career so far has moved from specialising in sharks – when a small but dangerous lemon shark specialised in biting her arm - to identifying the biggest single threat to wildlife in the oceans and doing something about it. The result is a remarkable form of multi-tasking involving public speaking, campaigning, further research and being the author of books for children which entertain whilst educating the young and their parents about the biggest single threat we can all do something about – the terrible toll that plastic in our oceans is taking on sea life in our rivers and oceans. Of that more later after the following story in pictures.

LEFT: Sarah meets Jessica, a famous hippopotamus who was rescued by a South African couple who now let her sleep on their porch. Sarah spent some time with Tonie and Shirley Joubert to understand better their motives and relationship with Africa's most dangerous land mammal.



ABOVE: Sarah on the hunt for sharks at the Tanjung Luar fish market in Lombok, Indonesia. Over the last few decades Indonesia has become the world's largest supplier of shark meat and shark fins - despite huge declines in their number and many species therefore being under strict protection. While filming one of her YouTube videos Sarah finds a few shark species that have been caught as a 'bycatch' by local fishermen - but the people making the big profits are the international tradesmen.



ABOVE: At the fish market at Tanjun Luar in Lombok, Indonesia, Sarah investigates what the local fishermen have caught. She photographs the young scalloped hammerhead and suspected nurse shark - later also finding blue spotted rays, black tip reef sharks and a larger adult grey nurse shark too. It is a disconcerting sight for an ecosystem already on the verge of collapse.



ABOVE: During one of the long droughts at a game reserve where she worked in Limpopo, South Africa, Sarah learnt how to catch Catfish by hand. After leaving the fish in fresh water overnight locals often dry the fish to make biltong – apparently a local delicacy although it didn't suit Sarah's taste buds! Luckily for these fish most were relocated to a larger water hole - although the resident crocodiles had most of the luck!



LEFT: Grey seals haul themselves onto a log at the mouth of the Nekite Estuary – in Canada's Great Bear Rainforest – to avoid hungry transient orca and grizzly bears when the tide is out.



ABOVE: Sarah has always been drawn to large predatory species and remote locations although working under these conditions can be risky. She started her career by specialising in shark research. During her time at the Bimini Biological Field Station in the Bahamas, a one-metre lemon shark inflicted this deep bite when she was deployed to capture and tag it. With no doctor on the island, disinfection and basic first aid saved her arm.



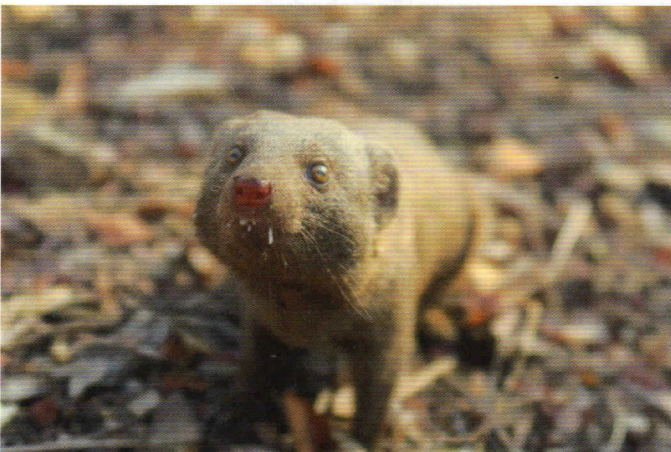
ABOVE: A 3-metre Tiger Shark was caught, DNA-sampled, tagged and released safely at Bimini where Sarah freedives outside the cage. Very hands-on research!



ABOVE: Sarah is not always looking for sharks. Here she is surfing the Indonesian waves on the island of Lombok during her day off.



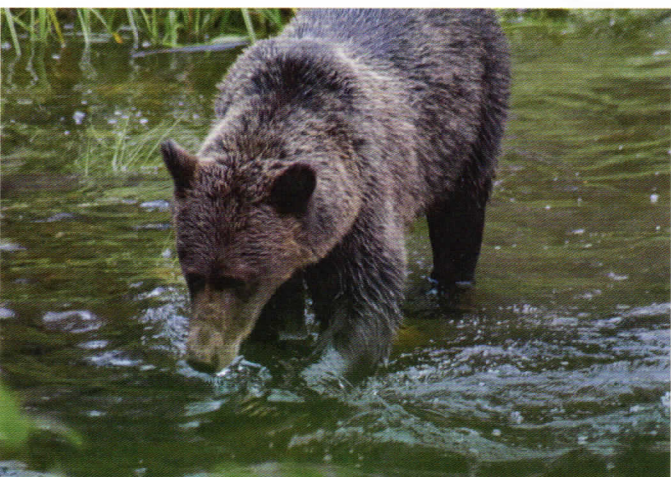
ABOVE: This is the breathtaking Mashatu game reserve in Botswana. Sarah found that even in the most remote parts of the world such as Mashatu it is impossible to escape the impact of human activity.



ABOVE: Dodger was part of a dwarf mongoose business which Sarah was researching in Limpopo, South Africa, for Bristol University. It was part of a behavioural trial focusing on the impact of human activity and noise on such creatures.



ABOVE: This is Sarah relaxing on a morning off at the stunning Great Bear Lodge in British Columbia, Canada, where she trained then worked as a Grizzly Bear guide. The floating building was old fishing lodge which was dragged to the area by boat.



LEFT: A female grizzly bear is foraging in the beautiful Nekite Estuary which is part of the largest temperate coastal rainforest in the world – The Great Bear Rainforest in Western Canada.



ABOVE: These Jack Ass penguins at Betty's Bay in Gansbaai, South Africa, are having a particularly tough time. While farming with white shark tour operators Sarah learnt much about the connectivity of the area. A drop in shark numbers and a rise in Fur Seal populations poses an extra threat to these little creatures which are already low on habitat and pressured by rising temperatures.



ABOVE: This is Sarah's old 'backyard' at the Great Bear Lodge in British Columbia, Canada. Though the high mountains make it look like a lake, this body of water is almost 300 feet deep and often is host to transient killer whales known as orca, sealions and humpback whales which all follow herring and salmon schools.



LEFT: Sarah returns to England every year to visit education institutes and share the experience and knowledge she has gained. She is particularly passionate about raising awareness about environmental issues. Here she is seen using 'Somebody Swallowed Stanley' – the children's picture book she wrote – to teach young people about the dangers of plastic pollution and how it harms wildlife. See also Sarah's website www.thisiscreature.com

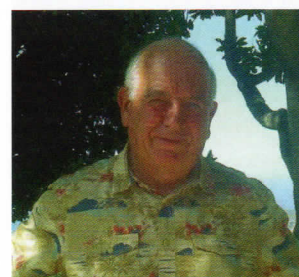
Below: Sarah Roberts in action

but also spends time visiting schools and colleges in the UK and elsewhere. She conducts workshops with children, students, teachers and adults to raise awareness of the



damage we are doing to wildlife on our planet and how we can do better. Sadly it can be hard to interest many people in the importance of this subject even though time is running out to do something effective to save other species. Slogans like Save the Planet have little resonance for many but Sarah's work makes good viewing on YouTube, Instagram and her websites www.sarahrobertsofficial.com and www.creaturebooks@gmail.com. Have a look. It's very interesting.

Andrew Harris – www.andrewharris.co.uk - gratefully acknowledges the help and pictures provided by Sarah Roberts for the production of this article. The planned article about Lancaster University's Health Innovation Campus has been deferred to a future date.



The tale that emerges from our story in pictures is that wildlife is struggling and one of the biggest single threats is plastic pollution. Sea life can choke and die because of what the human race throws away unthinkingly. The evidence suggests that we should all avoid single-use plastic items that can't be recycled, try and boycott substances like soap and cosmetics that contain micro-beads, think twice about any clothing which uses the word 'poly' as they release micro-fibres when washed, pick up plastic items for safe disposal, support organisations like 'Project Zero' and persuade others to help in this way. Sarah's children's book 'Somebody Swallowed Stanley' – a plastic bag – is available for schools. A recent study suggested that plastic which find its way into our oceans can affect over 700 different species and kill more than a million sea birds and 100,000 marine mammals each year. With an estimated 5.25 trillion tonnes of plastic in our oceans already the time for action is now. For more information visit www.thisiscreature.com

Sarah Roberts travels around the world to film and work