

## HighBeam Research

**Title:** You ask the questions; (Such as: so, Saba Douglas-Hamilton, 'telly wildlife stunner', what's the most unusual snack you've eaten in the bush? And however did you get that name?).(Features)

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SABA DOUGLAS-HAMILTON, 31, was named by tribesmen living near her family's farm on the shores of Lake Naivasha, Kenya. The daughter of the elephant expert, Iain Douglas-Hamilton, she and her younger sister, Dudu, accompanied him on trips into the bush from an early age. She studied anthropology at St Andrews, before returning to East Africa to work for her father and help set up the Save the Elephant conservation group. She has also worked for the Save the Rhino trust. Her documentaries - Going Ape, about chimpanzees in the Ivory Coast, and The Search for Virgo, the story of her attempt to trace an elephant she knew as a child - have been shown on BBC2. Her next programme, Living with the Elephants, will be aired on Sunday. She lives in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi.

How did you get your name? What does it mean?

Betty Cooper, Bournemouth

Saba is "seven" in Kiswahili. I was born on 7 June at 7 o'clock in the evening on the seventh day of the week in 1970, and I am the seventh grandchild.

Were there scary moments during your childhood expeditions into the bush?

Sandra Smithers, London

Lots, but what I remember most is that full moon was always exciting because that was when the Masai might swoop down on our farm and raid our cattle. One night we heard an alarm call - "Aooooooweee!" - and rushed out to see what we could salvage as they took off into the hills. There was confusion, but it wasn't scary - it was fantastic, and alive, and I greatly miss those days.

Have you been bitten or clawed by any creature?

KC Gu, London

There is a very poisonous little snake called a carpet viper that bit me when I was 18. It was at night and we were right up in the north of Kenya on a camel safari. I got a massive dose of poison. If it hadn't have been for my friends, I might not have made it. They wrapped my leg in a pressure bandage and gave me electric shocks from the coil of the engine every five minutes. I'm still unsure to this day if electric shock is effective for snakebite, but when you don't have anything else, you use what you've got!

What is your first memory of elephants? Do you know how old you were?

Phoebe Waterman, by e-mail

My first encounter was when I was six weeks old, held in my mother's arms as she introduced me to a female, called Virgo, in Manyara National Park, Tanzania. But my first memory is being charged by a fearsome matriarch, Boadicea, who did the most convincing threat charges, smashing through vegetation and giving an ear-splitting scream while towering over the car. She was later shot, probably by poachers. It was then that I learnt how brave the matriarchs were being, placing themselves between their families and danger and taking the bullet.

Eating out in the jungle must require you to be very resourceful: what's your most unusual bush snack?

Charles Newton, by e-mail

My father and I once came across a dead eland that had just been killed by lions. It was so fresh that we cut out a fillet from the carcass. Later on we discovered the lions had been all around us at the time, hiding in the bushes.

Who are your heroes? And what is your opinion of Sir David Attenborough?

T Blackstone, Norwich

The explorers Richard Burton and Wilfred Thesiger; Winston Churchill; my Scottish grandfather, a Squadron Leader in the war, who fought in the battle for Malta; my immediate family; Dian Fossey, Gilfrid Powys, Blythe Loutit and Alan Root, and many of my nomadic friends in northern Kenya. Sir David Attenborough is a deity in the wildlife world. The meticulous research that goes into his films and the infectious enthusiasm with which he presents the natural world are an inspiration. Long may he live!

I'm planning a safari holiday next year. What would you recommend?

Harriet Kirby, London

I think Kenya is the most exciting and beautiful country in Africa. East Africa is attractive to romantics in search of true wilderness. Tanzania and Namibia come a close second. Go off the beaten track; it'll cost more, but it's worth it.

What's it like being part of a white minority in Africa? I can't help feeling there's something of the colonial explorer about you.

Will Bosanquet, Manchester

My maternal grandparents were French and Italian explorers who walked from the Congo to Kenya in the late 1920s. They experienced an age-old Africa I would love to have seen. In 1963 [Jomo] Kenyatta welcomed the colonials to independent Kenya, promising them a peaceful future. Today white Kenyans are one of the smaller tribes in the country. I'm delighted to have been raised in Africa, and I don't much notice being a minority.

`Telly wildlife stunner': how do you plead?

Joseph Hamilton, by e-mail

Yikes!

What have you learnt from your father?

Julia Vidler, Lewes

My parents are my mentors. I greatly admire my father's compassion, his integrity, his logic, his sense of humour and his calm in the face of a crisis. He is also an adventurer and has a sixth sense with elephants. My mother compliments him with her Italian fire, warmth, energy and artistic temperament. They have allowed me to dream, taught me to be self-sufficient, not to fear my fate, keep a stiff upper lip and maintain a sense of humour. Plus lots of other stuff like the names of Scottish ancestors, a love of mountains, how to reel, and how not to puke in my father's aeroplane.

If you were reincarnated

as any animal, which one would you pick?

Tom Butterfield, Croydon

Depending on air, land or sea, a Bateleur eagle, a caracal, or a giant squid or dolphin.

`Living with the Elephants', Sunday, 5.55pm, BBC2

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