

Introduction

A smooth black fin emerges from the ocean, then another, and two more. Your pulse quickens. It's a family of orcas, resident around the Bay of Islands in New Zealand, and they're hunting rays on the sea floor, clearly visible in these transparent, shallow waters. The fact that this moment, an encounter with such graceful and powerful fellow inhabitants of our planet, was unexpected and unpredictable makes it all the more magical. Such is the joy of watching wildlife in its natural home.

For many people, one of the most rewarding experiences of travel is seeing creatures that you wouldn't encounter back home. Whether you set out to see them deliberately on a safari or spot them through sheer luck, the thrill of watching a wild animal go about its daily business always makes your senses tingle. But, we asked ourselves, how would you know what you had spotted? And if you wanted to see a particular animal, how would you know where to start looking? That was the genesis of this pictorial guide to 300 animals.

To compile this book we turned to the highly experienced biologist and writer Amy-Jane Beer, who created a wishlist of weird and wonderful creatures from around the world. Mark Carwardine, who travels the world photographing wildlife, contributed a foreword. We included all of the most iconic animals – lions, tigers, elephants and sharks – in the alphabetical order but we wanted to go further than those headline acts and showcase much more of the mind-blowing diversity of the natural world. The realisation that such extraordinary wonders have evolved on our planet – these are just 300 out of more than eight million species – is humbling and inevitably prompts questions about our role and place in the world: no matter your age, few things spark curiosity like another living thing.

Between these covers, you'll find descriptions of where to see a multitude of mammals, from snow leopards and mountain goats at the very top of the world, to such resourceful residents of African deserts as antelopes and the fennec fox. In the air, we've got birds and bats, from the giant albatross to thumb-sized hog-nosed bats – and also the occasional gliding lizard, fish or mammal. Under the waves, we'll show you giant clams,

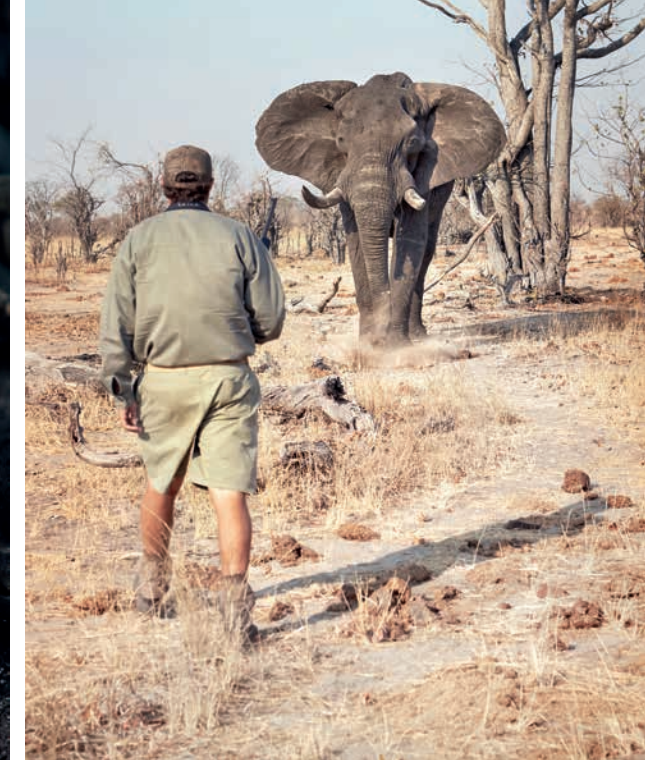
corals, whales and the wobbegong. And we could have created a whole book just about incredible insects to spot – from beautiful butterflies to the formidable Hercules beetle. Each entry also suggests some of the places where you will have the best chance of seeing the animal. We hope that this book will inspire you to seek out some of the wildlife you've always wanted to see and add many more creatures to the list.

Amy-Jane Beer

Amy studied Biology at Royal Holloway, University of London, and earned an unglamorous PhD studying the nervous systems of sea urchins. Urchins are fascinating, but with all of nature's myriad splendours out there she found it hard to focus on just one species and set about becoming a generalist, a seeker of wild wonders, and a writer of science and natural history for all ages. She was editor of *Wildlife of Britain* and *Animals Animals* magazines and currently edits *Wildlife World* magazine for the People's Trust for Endangered Species. She writes books, regular features for *BBC Wildlife* magazine and Country Diary columns for *The Guardian*, and is working on her first novel – nature-inspired of course. She helps judge the BTO Bird Photographer of the Year competition. Her favourite wild species? Usually the one she's privileged enough to be looking at.

Mark Carwardine

Mark Carwardine is a zoologist, an outspoken conservationist, a TV and radio presenter, a widely published wildlife photographer, a best-selling author, a wildlife tour operator, a lecturer, and a magazine columnist. He presented the six-part BBC-TV series *Last Chance to See*, with actor Stephen Fry, in which the unlikely duo travelled the world in search of a motley collection of endangered species (following in the footsteps of a similar journey Mark made with author Douglas Adams 20 years earlier). For many years, Mark presented the weekly half-hour programme *Nature* on BBC Radio 4, and he has written more than 50 books on a variety of wildlife and conservation subjects.



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Foreword

What's the best wildlife encounter in the world? Well, it all depends... My luckiest encounter was undoubtedly in Wolong, southwestern China, when a giant panda unexpectedly stepped out of the bamboo forest right in front of me. We stared at one another for a full two seconds – two whole earth-shattering, hair-raising, life-changing seconds with a real-life wild giant panda – before it ambled back into oblivion never to be seen again (not by me, and probably not by anyone else on the planet).

But how can you compare that with the adrenalin rush of a face-to-face underwater encounter with a hungry tiger shark in the Bahamas? Or the sheer delight in tickling a 30-tonne grey whale under the chin in Mexico (I've done that more often than I can remember, but it still reduces me to a gibbering wreck every time)? How about breathlessly stalking a southern white rhino on foot, or the sheer spectacle of South Georgia's avian Glastonbury, with 150,000 pairs of king penguins on a single beach?

Bigger isn't necessarily better. I remember once in Arizona putting on red lipstick (it was the first and only time I have ever worn make-up of any kind), puckering up my lips, and crossing my fingers in the hope that nobody would see me. Oh, and my mouth was full of sickly-sweet sugar-water. I was hummingbird-watching and, in a heartbeat, there were blurred shapes like bees on speed, whizzing backwards and forwards in front of my face. One particular hummingbird – a Costa's, with iridescent purple flares like a flashy moustache – hovered right in front of my face with the immaculate precision of a helicopter pilot. Very carefully, it put its beak right inside my mouth, and drank. I could feel its wingbeats against my cheeks. Wildlife encounters don't come much closer, or more thrilling, than that.

The truth is that all wildlife encounters are 'the best'. After more than 30 years spent criss-crossing the globe, and countless millions of air miles, I haven't lost one scintilla of the original passion and wonderment that first plunged me into the world of wildlife. I know I am not alone when I say that I need to see wildlife just to survive normal daily life. It doesn't have to be exotic or far away. I never think 'oh, it's just a robin', or 'it's just a rabbit'. The other day, I was watching a badger emerge from its urban sett – right next to the platform at my local railway station. It popped its head out and peered at all the commuters a few metres away, before having a scratch and running off into someone's garden. It made my whole day.

Quite simply, wildlife of any kind is good for the soul.

Wildlife watching can be good for the wildlife, too. I firmly believe that responsible ecotourism can be an invaluable conservation tool. It makes wildlife worth more alive than dead, by raising much-needed foreign exchange for cash-strapped governments, providing employment for local people (everything from anti-poaching patrols in Kenya to carving wooden Komodo dragons to sell to tourists in Indonesia) and, managed properly, raises funds for the upkeep of national parks and reserves. But it's more than that. Everything doesn't have to be measured in financial terms alone. Responsible ecotourism also helps to rekindle a concern for wildlife and a sense of wonderment that many people seem to have lost. The closer people feel to wildlife, the more they care about its well-being.

Let's face it. The world's wildlife needs all the help it can get. We have already lost countless species, and many more are teetering on the brink. The point is that we cannot rely on an aye-aye to worry about the wellbeing of a snow leopard, or a mountain gorilla to look out for a whale shark. Only we can do that. And through a combination of indifference, incompetence, ignorance and greed, we are failing to do it properly. We need more people who care.

Amy has done a wonderful job in compiling this wide-ranging collection of, by any measure, some of the best wildlife encounters in the world. The result is a fantastic potpourri of hundreds of weird and wonderful animals – from aardvarks and fossa to magnificent frigatebirds and blue whales – with top tips on where and when to spot them in the wild.

I hope, if you're lucky enough to have seen some of them already, the book will bring back many happy memories. If you haven't, I'm sure it will inspire you to go and look for them. But these are also encounters to dream about. Nothing beats searching for whales with the wind in your hair, tracking wild dogs with African dust clinging to your boots, or cruising past a polar bear with your fingers numb with the cold. But, sometimes, it is enough just knowing that all those otters, platypuses, manatees, giant tortoises, brown bears and all the other awe-inspiring, captivating, remarkable animals in this book are out there, wild and free.

by Mark Carwardine



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Aardvark *Orycteropus afer*

WHAT The name translates as ‘earth-pig’, but while true pigs are hoofed mammals, this secretive ant guzzler is in a group of its own. A night safari is essential if your heart is set on an encounter. You might meet one on its nightly rounds, where it uses senses of hearing and smell so acute that vision is almost redundant. That comical snout contains arguably the most complex olfactory apparatus in the animal kingdom, and the area of an aardvark’s brain dedicated to smelling is hugely enlarged. Having sniffed out an ant or termite mound, the aardvark uses sharp, hooflike claws to break in, then slurps up prey with its long, sticky tongue. **WHERE** Several reserves in the South African Karoo offer specialist aardvark tours, aiming to track their resident aardvarks as they snuffle between ant or termite mounds.



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African savannah elephant *Loxodonta africana*

WHAT If the lion is Africa’s king of beasts, this magnificent pachyderm, the world’s largest land animal, might be its high priestess. Elephant society is orderly, cooperative, empathetic and matriarchal, and an encounter in the wild leaves you in no doubt you’ve been touched by greatness – three to six tonnes of it. Elephants make an equally big impression on the landscapes they occupy. Their feeding habits play a major part in maintaining the characteristic open woodland of the savannah, and stimulating regrowth of the trees they push down or rip up. **WHERE** The once vast range of the plains elephants across eastern and southern Africa is increasingly fragmented by human development, but responsible elephant tourism has an important role to play in improving a strained relationship between the species and human communities. The largest remaining population is in Botswana’s Chobe National Park.

Walrus *Odobenus rosmarus*

WHAT This huge Arctic seal-cousin hunts by touch using its moustache of wiry bristles and feeds by suction powerful enough to open large clams. The tusks, too long to be any use in feeding, serve as grappling hooks when the walrus pulls itself from the water onto ice floes, giving rise to the scientific name *odobenus*, meaning ‘toothwalker’.

WHERE The remote sites favoured by walrus make them an expensive bucket list tick, but haulouts such as those on Cape Seniavin and Round Island in western Alaska are well serviced by tour operators, with options for single- or multi-day trips by air from Anchorage. In Europe, a high-summer trip to the abandoned mining settlement of Pyramiden on Spitzbergen offers good opportunities to see the slightly smaller Atlantic variety.



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Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus/spp*

WHAT These exquisitely coiffed birds appear to be clothed in silk and adorned with curls of crimson and gold wax. These intense flecks of colour are derived from pigments in fruit the birds consume avidly for much of the year. In winter individuals can devour several hundreds of berries a day, more than double their body weight. They feed communally and the sight of a hungry flock recently arrived from the north in early winter and feeding among fruit-laden branches of rowan, hawthorn, holly and yew is a highlight of the birding calendar in temperate Europe. **WHERE** Waxwing eruptions (large-scale movements in search of winter food) are, literally, a moveable feast, with birds arriving, stripping fruit and moving on within days or even hours. The best bet is to familiarise yourself with locations offering suitable berry trees, check regularly and use social media to alert you to arrivals.

Wētāpunga
Deinacrida
heteracantha

WHAT With its Maori name meaning ‘God of ugly things’ the wētāpunga is the largest of New Zealand’s formidable cricket-like wētās, and one of the world’s largest insects, with females easily outweighing an average sparrow or mouse. Despite appearances, they are leaf-eating herbivores.

WHERE Described as the ‘jewel in the crown’ of New Zealand conservation, Hauturu-o-Toi or Little Barrier Island lies 80km north of Auckland. Giant wētās are among many hundreds of threatened species of animal and plant that survived here after being extirpated on the mainland. Visits require a permit from the Department of Conservation and are subject to strict biosecurity – be prepared to have bags and clothing searched for stowaways. The species was reintroduced to Motuora island in 2010 and Tiritiri Matangi island in 2011.

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Whale shark *Rhincodon typus*

WHAT At up to 12.6m and 21 tonnes, the world’s largest fish has a vast global range, occurring almost anywhere with ocean temperatures higher than 21°C. A filter feeder, it cruises at around five kilometres an hour – a speed that can be matched by humans for short distances. Individual sharks appear tolerant of company and the shark-watching industry is booming in areas where large numbers gather seasonally. Try to avoid tours where sharks are fed, as this disrupts their natural behaviour, and resist the temptation to touch or approach close than 5m – it’s a shark, not a fairground ride. **WHERE** In July and August, Cancun, Mexico is whale shark central. Highly regulated tours around the islands of Holbox, Contoy and Mujeres often guarantee sightings. Swimming near the sharks is permitted, but not scuba diving. For that, try Baja California Sur or Western Australia’s Ningaloo Reef.

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