

PRESS RELEASE

** March 2010

ICON FILMS CELEBRATES 50th ANNIVERSARY OF BORN FREE WITH BBC4 COMMISSION

Bristol-based factual producer **Icon Films** has been commissioned by **BBC4** to produce a 1x60' historical documentary, *The Born Free Legacy* to mark the 50th anniversary of the publication of Joy Adamson's book.

The one-off film tells the story of how what started out as an experiment by George and Joy Adamson, to see if they could bring up an orphaned lioness and release her back into the wild, turned into an international phenomenon. The film also explores how Elsa's story changed the public's perception of wildlife and helped inspire a wave of conservationist movements.

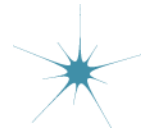
The Adamson's weren't without their critics, particularly within the scientific community, which claimed they had humanized Elsa and attributed her with emotions and behaviour that animals simply weren't capable of. From today's perspective, many conservationists see their approach as naïve, promoting the saving of individual charismatic animals and not the ecosystem in general.

The film features unique archive footage as well as interviews with top wildlife experts and George and Joy's friends and associates. It takes a fresh look at the work of the Adamson's and their legacy to the natural world.

Key contributors include Tony Fitzjohn, George Adamson's assistant 1971-86; Virginia McKenna, who played Joy Adamson in 1966 feature film of *Born Free*; Sir David Attenborough, who filmed the Adamson's with Elsa in 1961; and Dr Desmond Morris, Zoologist and author who turned down the opportunity to publish *Born Free*.

Harry Marshall, CEO, Icon Films says: "For half a century the story of George and Joy Adamson has inspired countless individuals and groups to become active conservationists – their legacy cannot be underestimated. This film re-addresses their story, looking at it from the point of view of both admirers and critics. Icon has a long-standing portfolio of history story-telling and we're excited to be presenting a fresh, honest account of the Adamson saga."

Director Alex Parkinson adds "It's astonishing to think that as recently as 50 years ago most people thought wild animals couldn't have personalities. And that just two people and a lion cub in the wilds of Kenya helped to change the whole of the Western World's opinion about this and inspire a conservation movement."



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Notes to Editors:

ICON FILMS

About Icon Films

Celebrating its 20th birthday this year, Icon Films has produced over 120 hours of factual programming for the UK and international market.

Icon Films brings together funders and works with broadcasters including the BBC, Channel 4, Five, ITV, National Geographic, Discovery Networks and PBS. Its work is internationally distributed by ITV Global Entertainment, BBC Worldwide and RDF Rights.

Icon Films has a reputation for originality, excellence, and entertainment across the breadth of factual genres including science, history, exploration and natural history.

Icon Films latest series for Animal Planet US, *River Monsters*, presented by angling explorer Jeremy Wade, became the best performing series in the network's history and is now in its second series.

Other recent productions include, *The Airmen and the Headhunters* (Channel 4, NGCI and WNET); inserts for *The One Show* (BBC One); *The Barefoot Anthropologist* (BBC4); *Mountains of the Monsoon* (BBC2); *Weird Creatures with Nick Baker* (AP International and Science) and *Travellers' Century* (BBC4).

Icon Films is run by a senior management team that includes Creative Director Harry Marshall, Managing Director Laura Marshall, Head of Production Andie Clare, Head of Finance Steve Ashworth and Head of Business Lucy Middelboe.

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