



**ICONFILMS**

## **PUBLICITY NOTES THE BORN FREE LEGACY**

### **Log Line**

To mark the 50th anniversary of the publication of *Born Free*, this one off special explores the lives and legacy of George and Joy Adamson and Elsa, the orphaned lioness they adopted and returned to the wild.

### **One Paragraph**

2010 marks the 50th anniversary of the publication of *Born Free*. This one-off special tells the moving and dramatic story of the lives and legacy of George and Joy Adamson and Elsa, the orphaned lion cub who they raised and then successfully returned to the wild. The seismic shift in popular attitudes towards wild animals that the book and subsequent film caused are as controversial today as they are fondly celebrated.

### **Synopsis**

*Born Free* caused a sensation when it was first published in 1960. As well as topping *The New York Times* bestseller list, the book and the Hollywood film that followed made a massive impact on conservation and science and our fundamental attitudes to wild animals and the environment.

The programme marks the 50th anniversary of *Born Free's* publication by revisiting the inspirational story of Austrian artist and author Joy and her husband George Adamson, a warden turned wildlife conservationist. The account of the couple's experiences and adventures in East Africa as they raised an orphaned lioness cub, and their success in training her to survive in the wild, won the hearts and minds of people around the world and

challenged the conventional view of wild animals as being without personalities, emotions or individual rights.

The extraordinary relationship between Elsa the lioness and her adopted 'parents' caused a seismic shift in popular attitudes towards animals and left a legacy that is as controversial today as it is fondly celebrated.

This compelling documentary was filmed on location in Kenya and draws on extraordinary archive, including home video footage filmed by Joy and George, shot over the course of 50 years.

Featuring contributions from their many friends, associates and contemporaries, *The Born Free Legacy* gives a remarkable insight into the personal lives and work of a couple who contributed to a sea change in our view of our relationship with wild animals and our place on the planet.

### **Key Contributors**

Sir David Attenborough, Naturalist and Broadcaster

Virginia McKenna, Actress and founder of the Born Free Foundation.

Desmond Morris, Zoologist and author

Tony Fitzjohn, George Adamson's assistant (1971 - 1988) and Field Director of the George Adamson Wildlife Preservation Trust

Adrian House, publisher, biographer and friend of the Adamsons.

### **Top Ten Facts**

1. Elsa the lioness was part of a litter of 3 cubs, Joy and George were only allowed to keep Elsa, the other cubs were sent to Rotterdam Zoo.
2. When filming 'Born Free' the crews filmed from inside cages while the actors and lions were free!
3. Elsa, the lioness central to *Born Free*, is buried in the Meru National park in Kenya
4. Real-life husband and wife actors Bill Travers and Virginia McKenna starred as the Adamsons in the film adaptation. They became so involved in the lions and their

welfare that they went on to create The Born Free Foundation, now headed by their son Will Travers

5. In later years Joy Adamson also released a cheetah called Pippa and a leopard called Penny, remaining in contact with them and their cubs. George released many more lions at his camp in Kora.
6. George Adamson can be seen on the **YouTube** clips of 'Christian the Lion' that have received many millions of views. Bill Travers found Christian living in a shop in London and took him to Kenya to be rehabilitated by George and released into the wild.
7. Kenya is at risk from losing all its lions in the next 20 years. There are currently thought to be no more than 2000 left in the country according to the Kenya Wildlife Service, down from 2,700 in the year 2000.
8. Some of the lions at Meru National Park wear tracking devices on collars around their necks to monitor their movements, eating habits and most importantly, any conflicts with humans and their livestock.
9. You can still visit and stay at Joy Adamson's house, *Elsamere* on the banks of Lake Naivasha which is now run by the Elsa Conservation Trust.
10. Most of the extraordinary archive footage used throughout The Born Free Legacy came from The Elsa Conservation Trust and The Born Free Foundation.