

THE LOSS OF THE CROCODILE HUNTER

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On September 5, 2006, the world lost an amazing man, Steve Irwin, otherwise known as “The Crocodile Hunter.” If you have never watched any of his numerous documentaries or heard of his Australia Zoo, you probably have heard about this “crazy” guy from down under who literally jumped on and tackled crocodiles. When was the last time you thought about crocodiles as a species that needed the help of humans to survive? After all they have existed on this planet for millennia. Most of us think about crocodiles as fierce, powerful predators that attack prey with their mouth, hold on, pull underwater, and roll until it is dead. It’s called the death roll. Most animals and people do not survive this kind of attack.

Enter, Steve Irwin. Steve was born near Melbourne in 1962 to parents that founded the Queensland Reptile and Fauna Park, which later became Australia Zoo. They specialized in rehabilitating ill or injured kangaroos, wallabies, wombats, koalas and all reptiles. Steve grew up around the wildlife of Australia that his parents, Lyn and Bob, were devoted to saving. The animals were his playmates and Steve was comfortable around them. Steve followed in his father’s foot steps and frequently commented that “he just wanted to be like his dad.” Steve’s father educated him from a young age about the importance of safety when handling animals. He was 9 years old when he began working actively with crocodiles. Human interference placed these crocodiles on the endangered species list and Steve and his dad helped the cause.

Steve Irwin became one of the world’s most famous conservationists, striving to educate the public and relocate the crocodiles with enthusiasm and exuberance never before seen on television. His first episode of Crocodile Hunter aired in 1992. It hit the airwaves in the USA in 1996. By 1999 the show had reached 137 countries and 500 million people. Think about that. This man was able to teach people that an animal that elicits fear, that is synonymous with danger, that attacks humans, and is powerfully strong, deserved to be saved and cared for. He wanted people to respect and care for the animals that inhabit the Earth with us. He taught us to not be afraid of the unknown, to be open minded, to appreciate the animals, even if they are scary at times.

The most admirable quality I saw in this man was that he lived what he loved to do. He lived it each and every day. He valiantly and knowingly placed himself in harms way on a daily basis. His enthusiasm and excitement when he found a 10 foot poisonous snake or any other animal he was doing a show on was evident in his face and mannerisms. There were many close calls, but none proved fatal until a stingray plunged its barbed tail into his heart. There are many different types of stingrays with different types of toxins that are injected into victims via their barbed tail. There are only 17 fatal stingray attacks on record. Apparently, Steve interrupted his normal filming schedule that day when he saw this large group of stingrays. He decided that it would be a perfect segment to film. In only 6-7 feet of water he swam over top of a large bull ray and it struck him in the chest. The 44 year old icon was gone, but he has left a legacy that will never be forgotten.

Just as Steve was adamant about educating the public and saving these animals, we need to strive to educate the public about what we do. Give your clients handouts, write articles about the benefits of your modality and services, and speak at the local high school or senior center. People do want to know what their options are regarding their health both for themselves and their pets. It is our job to inform them as best as we can.

“My job, my mission, the reason I was put on this planet, was to save wildlife.”

“The one thing I would want to be remembered for is passion and enthusiasm.”

Steve Irwin