



**A YEAR ON PLANET EARTH PRESS PACK**

**INCLUDING STEPHEN FRY Q&A**

**ALL CONTENTS UNDER STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL 00:01, TUESDAY 4TH JULY**

## ITVX - A Year on Planet Earth Summary

**TX: CONFIDENTIALLY THE FIRST TX IS SUNDAY 9TH JULY**



Showcasing the many wonders of the world, **A Year on Planet Earth**, reveals the incredible ways in which almost all life is connected and how where we are on our journey around the sun affects the lives of individual animals.

The fresh concept documentary series will draw on the most spellbinding and dramatic stories from all corners of the globe.

Combining extreme weather, breath-taking landscapes, epic wildlife spectacles and lovable animal characters, this series reveals our planet in a completely new light, uncovering how animals react and adapt to shifting habitats and unexpected events.

Presented by acclaimed actor, author and comedian, Stephen Fry, this unique series is brand new for **ITVX**, uncovering never before seen footage of our favourite creatures.

From Marion Island, home to one of the largest and most remote king penguin colonies on Earth, to China, capturing the rare sight of the giant pandas in monsoon season, A Year on Planet Earth is truly a year-long adventure around our world.

Featuring a story arc across the seasons, viewers will be immersed in the extremes of winter, spring, summer and autumn.

Filmed in more than 60 locations, the series covers a wide range of the most charismatic animals, including African elephants, polar bears, blacktip sharks, chipmunks, grizzly bears, cheetahs, leatherback turtles, pandas and zebras, among many, many others.

All of their individual stories are told, as never before, as we spend A Year on Planet Earth.

### **Press Contacts**

Press: Tom Westcott - [tom.westcott@itv.com](mailto:tom.westcott@itv.com)

Pictures: Peter Gray - [Peter.Gray@itv.com](mailto:Peter.Gray@itv.com)

## **Stephen Fry Press Pack Q&A**

**ALL CONTENTS UNDER STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL 00:01, TUESDAY 4TH JULY**



### **What can viewers expect from this new series?**

Stunning photography of the world, but in a way that concentrates on something so obvious and surprising about our planet that we often forget it: It's on a tilt, and it's *that* that creates the seasons, and the seasons create...well, everything!

### **What was your favourite place you visited and why?**

I had never, to my shame, been to Iceland before, so there was something extra special about hiking up to Europe's biggest glacier and standing there in the peace and dead quiet of an Icelandic winter, trying to make sense of the fact that we are - even in such tranquil silent spots, always hurling round the sun at 250,000mph. It's wonderful to watch an individual flake settling

onto the glacier to become part of a vast million tonne blanket of snow, but then under the rays of a lifting sun, reverting to a drop of water that trickles down, following nothing but gravity, to join a rivulet, then a beck, then a rill, then a stream, then a river until finally it becomes part of an unnamable gigantic torrent ... it's hard not to get poetic in one's head thinking of such simultaneously tiny and titanic moments in nature and our cosmos. The part becomes a whole, and then becomes a part again. Our story too, of course, in history, in culture, and in the earth.

### **Which animals from the series are your favourites and why?**

Oh it's so hard to pick. When you've seen bears of Canada caked in snow - the Ice Bears, as they're called — never properly filmed before, well it fair makes the heart beat faster. But so do those furry little pikas evading Tibetan foxes - or the privilege of standing amongst the billions and billions of Monarch butterflies who have emigrated to their one favorite little spot in Mexico. That's an experience - literally - like no other on earth.

### **Do you have a stand out memory from filming the series?**

Covid of course! The amazing thing was how the crews stayed out during the lockdowns that afflicted us and carried on filming - being always careful to make sure they weren't infectious and a threat to the wildlife they were recording of course. So while the world was pacing up and down at home with cabin fever, or on Zoom miming at their mother to go off mute, our amazing wildlife crews and production staff were face to face with the animals and plants, ocean currents and weather systems that carried on, as they always will, without any knowledge of vaccines, boosters or hand-washing protocols...

### **What did you learn from the programme?**

I guess it's a reinforcement of what we all kind of know deep down, and that is the interconnectedness of all the world's life systems. The running of warm air into cool air, of cool water currents into warm water currents ... from these movements, created entirely by the tilt of the earth, and its journey around the sun, following the basic laws of physics, how everything we think and know about life and living, and everything we are is as a result of that. Watching the vast migrations of animals who instinctively know that there is a band of rain coming down from the equator, and that if only they band together to journey a thousand miles to the north, they and their new young might reach its benevolent drops. Elephants can even smell water from miles and miles and miles away. Plus, without mounting the lectern and wagging the finger, the warm only has to be a bit warmer and its collision with the cool will create outcomes more extreme than we can bear to think about, destroying not just our hopes but the hopes of so many species who have evolved to cope with the miraculous tilt that makes our seasons.

### **Where does your passion for wildlife come from?**

Gosh. Well, I guess I owe a huge amount - as who doesn't? - to David Attenborough and the Natural History Unit, but also to the ITV Anglia series Survival which I used to watch all through my childhood. It fed a growing and still undated curiosity about plants and animals and the matchless drama of their daily struggles to eat, mate and bring up their young.

## **A YEAR ON PLANET EARTH - PROGRAMME INFORMATION FOR EACH EPISODE**

### **Episode One - Winter**

Stephen Fry hosts a new landmark wildlife series exploring how our annual journey around the sun impacts nearly all life on Earth. As we orbit our star, it is on a tilted axis of around 23.5 degrees and this creates the seasons. For those in the northern hemisphere, Winter brings plummeting temperatures, darkening days and times of hunger. On Svalbard's frozen sea-ice, a polar bear mother is preparing her cub for a life alone. Each week without food, she loses around a tenth of her body weight.

On the other side of the planet the far south leans towards the sun, bringing warmth and light. It is the southern summer. Deep in the Southern ocean, King Penguins flock to Marion Island, a tiny spec of land between South Africa and Antarctica. It is breeding season at this time of year and it becomes home to a million penguins. In the tropics the intensity of the sun drives cloud formation, bringing the rains. For a baby African elephant, this is the season of play but tougher times lie ahead.

### **Episode Two - Spring**

The Spring equinox brings equal day and night. Incredibly this celestial moment is detected by a leatherback turtle, compelling her to return to the beach where she hatched to lay her own eggs. Warmth and light prompt huge growth across the North, bringing courtship displays and baby booms. New life is a time of plenty for predators.

Further south, on the Equator, a cheetah mother in Kenya struggles in the wet season. In the far South, a King Penguin chick on Marion Island is singled out by a predatory giant petrel and flees for her life. The adult penguins rally to drive the monster away. A Tibetan fox provides for her cubs by hunting pika. But returns from her hunt with an injured foot leaving the future of her litter in jeopardy.

In Kenya, a cheetah mother targets an impala, providing a feast for her family. In Trinidad, the turtle hatchlings begin their instinctive march to the sea. Vultures, waiting for this moment, feast on them. But one lucky individual makes it to the sea.

### **Episode Three - Summer**

Stephen Fry continues his journey through the year. For much of the Northern Hemisphere, Summer is the season of the Sun. By June, we are half-way through our annual journey - the northern pole is in 24-hours of sunlight, while the south is frozen in darkness. But things aren't as simple as hot and cold, this is a season of feast, famine, fire and torrential rain.

In Canada's Rocky Mountains, summers are short. Pika must harvest flowers to feed on before the snow returns, all whilst fending off a few pesky local thieves. For Marion Island's king

penguin chicks, life has frozen to a standstill. Their parents left months ago and the chicks are facing starvation.

In Northern Australia, it's the dry season, and hooded parrots raise their chicks in termite mounds. But it is bushfire season, and approaching flames are threatening their survival. The same winds that fan the flames blow North over the Maldives, changing ocean currents and bringing with them plankton-rich waters.

### **Episode Four - Autumn**

Stephen Fry is on the last leg of his journey. Autumn is the season of change. For many, change brings opportunity, but it also brings huge challenges. In Northern Canada, the cold is felt early, by September temperatures can plummet as low as -20C. But there is one stretch of river that still flows, and 'ice bears' are able to fish for the final salmon of the season.

Those that can't survive the cold weather, need to get on the move. Monarch butterflies emerge, and set off on a mammoth migration to Mexico – 2500 miles south.

South of the Equator, it is the toughest time of the year in Southern Africa. The rains have been gone for many months, and watering holes have all-but dried up. An elephant calf is dangerously vulnerable to predators. Nearly a year old, it's time for a king penguin chick on Marion Island to answer the call of the ocean. She's replaced her fluffy coat with tightly-packed waterproof feathers. It is time for her first ever swim, but troubled waters are ahead.

### **Episode Five - Full Circle**

Experience the incredible strategies animals use to cope with their constantly changing worlds, as we journey through every season, in our annual orbit around the sun.

On Marion Island, a newly hatched penguin chick sheds its fluffy coat and swims past killer whales to begin its adult life. In winter, red squirrels rely on brilliant memory tricks to survive, and Stellar sea eagles turn to daylight robbery to make it through the coldest and harshest months.

During Spring, pika must avoid the jaws of the Tibetan fox, on the world's highest plateau. Meanwhile, a snow frog is joining the Earth's slowest race in the French Alps.

Summer brings a glut of new bamboo shoots for hungry pandas, whilst bushfires ravage Australia's Northern territory threatening its animal inhabitants.

Finally in autumn, a male musk ox fights off a half tonne rival to retain his dominance in the herd and an elephant family, weakened by drought, suffer a fatal loss before the rains arrive and their fortune changes.

### **Episode Six - A Year on My Planet Earth**

A Year on Planet Earth was filmed over three years across 60 locations.

A series of this scale this would be impossible without the collaboration of scientists, conservationists, and community members.

Marion Island, a remote and rugged island, is home to more than a million penguins, and a pioneering project providing evidence of an accelerating climate crisis.

In Florida, the migration of blacktip sharks is being studied with dramatic shifts in their migration being observed. In Trinidad, a former poacher is now protecting Leatherback turtle families from fishermen. In the Maldives, scientists are undertaking the world's biggest identification project of manta rays as they gather to feed on plankton.

In Zimbabwe, it's up to a small team of rangers to protect the animals from poachers. Despite the odds being stacked against them, they have had extraordinary success.

Uncovering new behaviour, using pioneering techniques and even putting their lives on the line - these are their stories.