



**PROFILE**

**Name:** Michael Bull  
**Expertise:** Lizards  
**Episode:** *Life in Cold Blood* (2008) – ‘Dragons of The Dry’

**About:** A professor at Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia, Michael has a PhD in Zoology. His research has overturned conventional ideas about the behaviour of cold-blooded creatures.

**Q What expertise did you bring to *Life in Cold Blood*?**

**A** I have been working for 25 years on the social behaviour of Australian lizards, mostly our sleepy

lizard, *Tiliqua rugosa*, where we reported the first case of long-term pair monogamy in a lizard. We now have some pairs that have remained together for over 20 years.

**Q What were the highlights and challenges of filming?**

**A** Wearing the same shirt day after day for photographic continuity, and admiring the patience of David [Attenborough] and the film crew who made multiple repeats of the same sequence to get it right. I was amazed to see how calm everyone remained when too much wind meant that a whole day of filming had to be abandoned.

**Q What do you remember most about the programme?**

**A** At one point there is a sequence of one lizard trying to get a response from its dead partner. Although this was staged for the filming, it is a real phenomenon we have seen and we have suggested it could be analogous to human grief. When the program was aired I received an indignant e-mail from a theologian explaining that only humans feel grief.

Sir David gets to grips with an Australian sleepy lizard



# EXPERT KNOWLEDGE

Meet Michael, Diane and Chadden – just three of the many experts whose collaboration and valuable insights have helped BBC film crews produce fascinating and groundbreaking footage.



**PROFILE**

**Name:** Chadden Hunter  
**Expertise:** Gelada baboons  
**Episode:** *The Life of Mammals* (2002) – ‘The Social Climbers’

**About:** A passionate wildlife biologist, Australian-born Chadden lived for three years in Ethiopia’s Simien Mountains to study gelada baboons for his PhD, where he worked with David Attenborough. Now based in the UK, Chadden subsequently pursued a career as a wildlife filmmaker.



**Q How did you contribute to *The Life of Mammals*?**

**A** I was a scientific consultant, advising on the monkey behaviour we were watching and filming. We were writing scripts, so David [Attenborough] would consult me on his pieces to camera. I sometimes spent days trying to write the perfect script. David would take a quick glance, turn to camera and say it in his own words, usually a 100 times better than my original. It’s a skill I marvel at to this day.

**Q What was it about your expertise that helped the crew?**

**A** Having studied this group for over three



**PROFILE**

**Name:** Diane Gendron  
**Expertise:** Blue whales

**Episode:** *The Blue Planet* (2001) – ‘The Blue Planet’

**About:** Based at the University CICMAR-IPN in La Paz, Mexico, Diane has been researching the blue whales that feed off the coast of Baja California for over 25 years. Her masters thesis proved that, unlike other whale species, these blue whales feed all year round and in their breeding ground.

**Q What is your role working with a film crew?**

**A** I show them the whales and explain their behaviour, so it’s mostly giving the knowledge I have. You never know where the blue whales will be exactly

Diane looks out for blue whales off the Mexican coast

but there are many aspects of their distribution that make them easy to find. When *The Blue Planet* crew came I knew where they were.

**Q What was it like working with *The Blue Planet* crew?**

**A** The camera guy was good but he was difficult to work with at first. It was bit of a struggle at the beginning but at the end it



was a good feeling overall. After a couple of days I realised he knew a lot because one day there was this little red fish at surface and he knew what it was, and I was really surprised. I was really happy that he was there to tell me what it was.

**Q Do you have any memorable moments?**

**A** The little red fish – to me it was a new species. They are called myctophids and they live really deep down. It has been shown that sometimes they come to the surface but nobody had seen that in the gulf except me with this crew on that day. So to me it was a real revelation. I managed to capture

some of them. I used the fish to do studies on feeding habits in general. It was an exciting moment and also an unusual event – so for me this is something very exciting about this collaboration between science and documentary.

Chadden films a group of gelada baboons (main picture)

years I knew their behaviour inside out. I could predict what individual monkeys would do and spot a potential fight about to break out.

**Q What were the most memorable moments from filming the gelada baboons?**

**A** Before dawn we’d perch ourselves on the top of 300m sheer cliffs and wait for the gelada to



Gelada baboons gather for a grooming session

climb up from their sleeping ledges and surround us for their morning grooming session. My study group numbered about 260 individuals but they often joined with other troops to form grazing herds of 800-900 baboons. When one of these mega-groups surrounded us the noise and spectacle was overwhelming.

**Q What were the challenges?**

**A** Our worst challenge came from the brutal mountain weather. Strong storms washed out the only mud track into or out of the mountains and we found ourselves stranded in tents with streams running through them. We had to hire a bulldozer to come rescue us. We all sat on the roof in the lashing hail holding on with white knuckles as it slid down mud slides to get us out of there.

**Q Did your career in wildlife filmmaking begin with this experience?**

**A** I had dabbled with media before working on *The Life of Mammals* but I was still very much focused on an academic career in biology. Meeting Sir David for the first time and working with him crystallised my career change.

At the end of our shoot I remember Sir David putting his arm around me, handing me \$5,000 and asking me to head off to the deserts of Djibouti to find the elusive Gundi, a small mammal we wanted to film for another episode of *The Life of Mammals*. After years of studying one species I was looking for a career that would let me experience more variety in the natural world. It seemed like wildlife filmmaking was just the ticket.