The

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: Springwatch host Michaela Strachan

The prized possession you value above The film you can watch time and time **all others...** As I'm a vegetarian, it's my vegetable garden at my home in Hout Bay, near Cape Town in South Africa. It has eight tiered veg patches in which I grow everything possible.

The biggest regret you wish you could **amend...** Not learning to play a musical instrument properly. I learnt the flute for a few years, but gave up when I was eight because it made my neck ache!

The temptation you wish you could resist... Singing Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody when there's a karaoke night. It's excruciating – for everyone!

The book that holds an everlasting **resonance...** Born Free by Joy Adamson. I read it when I was 12 and it fuelled my love of wildlife. I wanted to be Joy and have my own lion cubs.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To be Doctor Who's assistant. David Tennant would be my Doctor.

The person who has influenced you most... My mum, Jo. She's 75 and never sees the bad in people.

The pet hate that makes yourhackles rise... Humans hunting elephants and rhinos just to make chopsticks out of their tusks or grind their horns into medicine. It drives me insane.

again... Monty Python's Life Of Brian. I knew most of the dialogue even before I saw it at the cinema – my older brother Gary and his friends were obsessed with it and kept acting the scenes to me.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...

Dian Fossey [the US zoologist who protected gorillas in Africa in the 60s-80s]. She gave her life to save animals [Fossey was murdered in Rwanda in 1985].

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...

> Cricket! I always thought it was boring, but my partner Nick and our nine-year-old son Ollie love it, so now I go to

matches with them and enjoy it though I often take a book!

> The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My flexibility. I trained as a dancer and used to be able jump off a table and land in the splits. Now I'm 48 I can't do it any more.

Left: David Tennant starring in Doctor Who. Above: cricket. Far right: a snow leopard



The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Don't judge people by your own circumstances. You have to broaden your knowledge to understand them.

The poem that touches your soul... I'm always moved by a poem I wrote about a baby orangutan called Lomon, who featured in a series I made called Orangutan Diary in 2007. It was about saving orphaned orangutans and I really connected with Lomon.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I know everything about British wildlife! People send me photos of obscure insects asking what they are, but I don't have a clue. Chris Packham does know everything, so they should ask him!

The event that altered the course of **your life and character...** Buying a holiday home in South Africa in 2002. Because I made that leap, I met Nick, then I moved there and we had Ollie.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd rescue all the moon bears in China and Vietnam that are locked up while tubes drain them of their bile to make medicine.

The song that means most to you...

Tubthumping by Chumbawamba raised my spirits if I ever got low when I had breast cancer last year [she had a double mastectomy]. I'm doing really well now.

The unending quest that drives you **on...** To inspire people to care for and love the environment.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day... I'd live with Mongolia's snow leopards. They're very elusive and little is known about them.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd be with my family all day [Nick, Ollie, and Nick's three children from his previous marriage - Jade, 26, and twins Tom and Sam, 24]. We'd watch the sunrise by a river in the Luangwa Valley, Zambia, and have coffee and rusks [African biscuits] before going on a walking safari. Later Nick and I would scuba-dive off Malaysia's Sipadan Island - while the kids snorkel - among barracuda, turtles and sharks. After a quick veg stir-fry on the beach we'd go to Knight Inlet in Canada to see grizzly bears salmon fishing in the rivers, then take a boat trip to follow orcas and humpback whales. We'd end the day back in Cape Town walking up Table Mountain - you can see the sunset on one side and the moon rising on the other. At the top Nick and I would share a bottle of chardonnay and a packet of cashew nuts. Then we'd take the cable car down and head home to bed.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Finding out I was pregnant with Ollie when I was 39. I was filming in Vietnam when I found out and I ran around showing the test to all the crew!

The saddest time that shook your world... When I was 16, my dad lost his job and our family lost everything. It resulted in me suffering from anorexia. But we came through it all.

The philosophy that underpins your **life...** Always look on the bright side of life. The world can be a harsh place, but you have to find the positives.

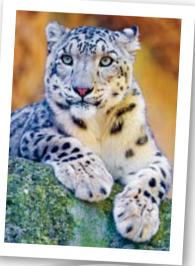
The order of service at your funeral...

I'll be buried in a biodegradable box, or have my body fed to sharks! I also want people to be sad – having a party and getting drunk seems so disrespectful.

The way you want to be remembered... She got children interested in wildlife.

The Plug... Michaela will perform her children's show Michaela Strachan's Really Wild Adventures at zoos, wildlife parks and family festivals this Easter and summer. michaelastrachan.co.uk. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PS...

Colin Firth and Michael Caine star in Kingsman: The Secret Service, in cinemas on Thursday. Tom Stoppard's first play since 2006, The Hard Problem, is at the National Theatre now. And BGT winners Collabro begin a UK tour in Carlisle on Monday

NEXT WEEK

 Learn how to draw your children or grandchildren in part two of our inspiring series
Our columnist Rachel Khoo's favourite dishes from around the world ● PLUS Britain's best TV listings guide

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