



From top: a kestrel, Bamburgh Castle and beach, Johannes Vermeer's *The Lacemaker*, Emperor penguins in Antarctica, a Spitfire, a plastic comb, Earth from space and Horatio Nelson

The prized possession you value above all others... A tiny brass falconry bell I bought in 1974. It was worn by a kestrel I got, called Tim. Owning Tim was a seminal moment in my life, because of the struggle it took to get him. Working class boys back then were not allowed to be involved in falconry, so I stole him from a nest and kept him in secret. It gave me a sense of independence.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... Ignoring a boy walking his new puppy on a Christmas morning when I was 17. He was about 12 and looked at me proudly, but I just walked on by. I was an angry young man at the time and I regret my lack of humanity.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...

I'd begin with a walk on Bamburgh beach in Northumberland with Itchy and Scratchy, my miniature poodles. I'd then go to Antarctica with my step-daughter, Megan, 17, to take photos of the wildlife. I'd have oysters for lunch at the oyster bar at New York's Grand Central Station, then go to the Rothko Chapel in Houston and look at the paintings. I'd end the day at my holiday home in south-west France with my partner Charlotte. We'd listen to the frogs in the swimming pool. I hate swimming so I turned it into a pond.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Alcohol. I probably have the capacity to be alcoholic, so give it up for months, but am always tempted back.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, which I read as a teen. I related to the character John The Savage. Like him, I felt isolated and like an outcast.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... To see how a top football manager like Alex Ferguson deals with his players at half-time when his side is losing in a big game.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... The lethargy and dishonesty in conservation. Too many committees say things are great when they aren't.

The film you can watch time and time again... *The Thing*. Although it is horror, it is my comfort film. I feel quite content with its apocalyptic end for humanity!

The person who has influenced you most... My biology teacher John Buckley. When I was 11, he turned me from a bird egg collector to a young scientist. He suggested I count the eggs and map the nests instead of stealing from them.



"I'm totally OCD about losing things – I once dropped a plastic comb in a car park and drove back to look for it"

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's Springwatch's Chris Packham

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... I'd love to meet Horatio Nelson before Trafalgar to see how he was with his men.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Love life. *All* life. Everything has its purpose in the ecosystem.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Spitfire planes. I was brought up on a diet of Spitfires because my dad loved them and they were based near our home in Southampton.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A basic blue plastic comb I'd had for five years. It fell out of my bag in a Cardiff car park but I only realised when I got to Southampton. I am totally OCD about losing things, so I drove back the next day to look for it, but the car park had been swept.

The unending quest that drives you on... To take a perfect photograph which exactly conveys that precise moment and what I was feeling when I took it.

The poem that touches your soul...

There is a poetic sentence in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* which means a lot to me: 'It is only with the heart that one can see rightly. What is important is invisible to the eye.'

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... People often say they think I'm a nice bloke. But I'm incredibly self-critical and don't see that.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... The death of my kestrel Tim. I buried it beneath the nest I'd stolen it from six months earlier, and I felt a huge sense of failure. I dealt with its death in total isolation, which made me a more independent person.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal Johannes Vermeer's *The Lacemaker* and sleep with it above my bed.

The song that means most to you... *Pure* by The Lightning Seeds. It may be a bit naff, but I think it's an unpretentious love song that bounces along.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Ten years ago, when my poodle Fish excitedly jumped on my lap and licked my face one day. My girlfriend at the time said, 'He loves you so much.'

The saddest time that shook your world... Five days after that day, when Fish was run over and killed.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To see Earth from space.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Go harder, go madder, go faster. It's about being the best you can be by pushing yourself harder than anyone else.

The order of service at your funeral... I would want a simple service, then be incinerated to Shout Above The Noise by the punk band Penetration, which has been a mantra for my life. It is about being an individual.

The way you want to be remembered... I don't feel the need to be remembered.

The Plug... I'm an ambassador for Arla Foods' Kids Closer To Nature campaign, which encourages children to experience the great outdoors. Visit www.kidsclosetonature.co.uk. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

*Marvel at *The Amazing Spider-Man*, with Andrew Garfield and Emma Stone, or sing along to gospel music film *Joyful Noise*, starring Queen Latifah and Dolly Parton. And Lulu tops the bill, supported by Blue, at the Henley Festival on 7 July.*



NEXT WEEK

- Orla Brady on swashbuckling in new drama *Sinbad*
- Treats from *The Great British Bake-Off*'s Paul Hollywood
- Monty Don's passion for sunflowers
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings guide