We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it’s naturalist David Bellamy’s turn.

The prized possession you value above all others... A compass I bought for my wife on our 50th wedding anniversary in 2009. It’s the one that guided Henry Morton Stanley across Africa to find fellow explorer David Livingstone in 1871, and it makes me feel in touch with a very special happening in history.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Selling my Lotus Super 7 in the 1960s when we needed a bigger, more sensible family car. Being so low to the ground gave a great sense of speed.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Saying ‘Yes’ to all requests! I’m 81 but I love working and helping others.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... A Girl Of The Limberlost from 1909 by Gene Stratton-Porter, which I read with my mum as a boy. It’s about nature.

Ballet shoes. Far... Chitty Bang Bang. Above right: Botticelli’s The Birth Of Venus.

The person who has influenced you most... My cookney nanny Sarah Low. She lived with our family in south-west London during the war and took over. She was always there when you needed her and she got us through it.

The figure from history for whom you’d most like to buy a pie and a pint... Winston Churchill. I guessed to see him lying in state in 1965. He was so concerned about our diminishing butterfly population he created a butterfly garden at his home Chartwell.

The film you can watch time and time again... Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. I must have been about 36 when I first saw it but I was still mesmerised. What a car!

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Think for yourself.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Ballet. I read Noel Streatfield’s Ballet Shoes when I was a kid and it inspired me to want to be a dancer, but I was too heavy – better built for rugby.

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The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Tiny racers playing loud bass music in fast cars.

The treasure/item you lost and wish you could have again... My sense of smell. I lost it when a hockey ball collided with my nose. Sadly I can’t smell flowers.

The unending quest that drives you on... To save all plants and animals from extinction around the world.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Never give up.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I would steal The Garden Of Earthly Delights by Hieronymus Bosch from the Prado Museum in Madrid.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... Anyone who thinks I’m an old anklebiting academic but I’ve been stuck with that nickname for decades. I’m not complaining though – it’s helped my career.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To be Father Christmas at Hamleys. Every child seems to think I’m Santa, so it would be good to actually do it one year.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Never give up.

The poem that touches your soul... The Old Vicarage, Granchester by Rupert Brooke. It’s so moving.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... The Old Vicarage, Granchester by Rupert Brooke. It’s so moving.

The way you want to be remembered... As a loving dad and grandad and a happy botanist who fought for conservation.

The order of service at your funeral... I’m too busy living to think about it. But when it happens I hope it’ll be sunny and they’ll play Henry Burton’s hymn There’s A Light Upon The Mountains.

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The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I’d take in the dawn at the North Pole with Rosemary before children came along. I’d then have a slap-up breakfast on the shores of Lake Huron, one of North America’s Great Lakes. We’d relive a trek we did on the West Coast of Scotland in our younger years, then climb Ben Lawers mountain; I’d have a nip of Springbank whisky to keep me going. A magic carpet would then take us and our children – Rufus, Henrietta, Brighid, Eoghan, Hannah – and our nine grand- children aged from eight to 24 to an exotic beach in Malaysia. We’d all go snorkel...ling and look at wonderful marine life, then eat oysters for lunch. After skiing at Plagne Montalbert in France, with a break for my favourite andouillettes – tripe sausages – we’d take all the kids to Fortnum & Mason in London for cream tea and Knickerbocker Glories. I’d end up in Italy’s Apanue Mountains drink...ing red wine and watching the sunset.

The saddest time that shook your family was together. A wonderful moment.

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