



PHOTO BY GAVIN THURSTON/COURTESY OF BBC AMERICA

David Attenborough is accompanied by a leatherback turtle. Weighing over half a ton, it is largest turtle on the planet, but its numbers have fallen dramatically. Attenborough, the narrator of BBC's "Blue Planet II," traveled to Trinidad to meet a community that is trying to save them.

# Natural Wonder

*David Attenborough is using his famous voice to turn attention to a part of the planet that urgently needs our help: the oceans*

**BY MEG MUNDELL**  
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It's the voice that's spawned a thousand imitators: wise but warm, avuncular and slightly husky, breathless with enthusiasm. The voice of a born storyteller, a plummy baritone infused with dry humor and a limitless capacity for wonder. For every vole scurrying through the undergrowth, there's a David Attenborough impersonator doing a dramatic YouTube voiceover.

At age 91, Sir David Attenborough has racked up 32 honorary degrees, written dozens of books and had some 15 species named after him, including an echidna, a carnivorous plant, a miniature marsupial lion and a weevil. He has been called the greatest broadcaster of our time.

At age 11, he began his career by selling newts from a nearby pond to zoologists at his local university. After his first on-camera appearance, his boss declared his teeth too big for a TV career. From his pioneering days of live TV broadcasts, where he wrangled a menagerie of animals in the studio, he began making wildlife documentaries, then rose through the BBC ranks to senior management roles. In 1973, he quit management to return

to his true love: writing and presenting natural history documentaries.

In his newest series, "Blue Planet II," the much-loved broadcaster and wildlife filmmaker revisits Earth's final frontier: the mysterious oceans covering more than 70 percent of our planet's surface.

Ambitious in scale and gorgeously shot, the series casts new light on the oceans: vast and mysterious, awe-inspiring and terrifying, teeming with life yet imperiled by human carelessness. Most people now live in cities, and being disconnected from nature makes it harder to care. By revealing this hidden world, Attenborough hopes to create an emotional connection — so that we feel not just wonder and awe, but also empathy and compassion for the creatures that inhabit this watery realm, a world he has spent a lifetime fighting to protect.

After six decades in the business, can nature still blow Attenborough's mind?

"Yes, from minute one," he said. "From this (new footage), I'm absolutely astounded, really. There were so many new things."

The series journeys through coral reefs, undersea forests, coastal zones and the ocean's darkest depths. Some of the startling footage, including shots of eels diving into a bizarre lake at the bottom of the sea, left the seasoned

narrator momentarily speechless.

"I couldn't believe what I saw. It takes a bit of time to get your mind around that sort of thing. How can there be a lake at the bottom of the sea? And then it explodes like a volcano!"

Four years in the making, the groundbreaking project seeks to capture the vast and teeming diversity of our oceans. Working closely with scientists, Attenborough's 25-strong crew spent more than 6,000 hours underwater, making 125 expeditions across 39 countries. They also took risks: producer Orla Doherty clocked up 500 hours in a deep-sea submersible that sprung a perilous leak deep beneath Antarctic waters (insuring the whole project was a total nightmare).

Technology has progressed somewhat since the first "Blue Planet" aired in 2001, and it is used to dazzling effect in the new eight-part series: from re-breathers, a diving apparatus that lets divers stay down longer without disrupting fish, to tiny probe cams that can peek into rock pool crevices. Working with marine scientists, the crew mounted cameras on the backs of orca and used tow-cams to zoom alongside dolphins and tuna.

"The amazing thing is how every film has

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