



If you've looked online you will know that Ben's death has prompted an absolutely incredible response from people all over the world who knew him through his work. The network of people that have been moved to write about him is immense. They include distant contacts and remote admirers who had never met him, through to numerous close colleagues and collaborators; many of whom are here today. His impact was extraordinary.

I was lucky enough to know Ben through most of his career. On behalf of those of us who knew him well and worked with him at the Institute of Zoology, and at the Centre for Biodiversity and Environment Research at UCL, I will try to summarise his work, and try to explain that extraordinary response.

So, what did Ben do and how did he do it?

What he did was to follow his enthusiasm and commitment to science-based conservation. Ben's research centred on three big trends that were playing out in the world at the start of this century. There was a widespread and growing concern about the decline of wild species everywhere. There was a desire to put conservation on a firm scientific footing. And there was burgeoning development of new technology that made it possible to monitor remote, cryptic and abundant animal populations in a way that had never previously been possible. Ben's great contribution was to bring these three things together in clever and creative ways. He pioneered new ways of gathering and analysing animal population data and then using this information to support conservation decisions. These were important innovations that brought a fresh, clear and quantitative understanding about what was happening to the world's animal populations, and what we might do about it. His findings have influenced significant pieces of policy internationally, as well as driving a whole new way of working with species data in biodiversity conservation.

How did he do it? He did it as only Ben could - with his characteristic charm, his great intellect, his unflappability, and his delightful sense of humour. Ben was a natural, effortless leader and a wonderful colleague. He managed a large group of young interns and research students with great kindness and generosity. He was an engaging and inspirational teacher. He managed to draw significant products out of teams of people that seemed hugely ambitious yet ended up being successful and rewarding for everyone. He was never really stuck on a problem. He would cheerfully find a way around even the most difficult technical or bureaucratic obstacle, grin, admit what he'd done was a fix more than a solution, but then quietly go on to develop a solution as well. He was extremely productive – his academic record is outstanding - but he never complained or seemed stressed. He had an unerring instinct for picking topics to work on that were at the same time both important and soluble. The results speak for themselves; in his papers, in policy documents and most importantly in the influence that his work will continue to have on conservation decisions into the future.

I loved working with Ben partly because of his ability to get things done, but mostly because it was always fun. He had the ability to make me laugh even at the most inappropriate moments, or in the most serious meetings with the most pompous people. Ben could never be bothered with self-importance or undue formality, and he had a wonderful sense of the ridiculous that I will always remember. He made us all laugh a lot, and he made us all love pigmy hippos and penguins just a bit more than we already did.

Ben was so positive, so alive and so creative that it seems impossible to believe that he is no longer going to be there with us, at the central node that he occupied in our research community.



He was everybody's friend, mentor, supporter and advisor. Every day we miss his cheery arrival, his warm chuckle that carried across a room, his ability to find a kind and positive thing to say to everyone— he always knew more about what was going on than the rest of us. We will miss him terribly, but we won't forget him because he taught all of us a new way of thinking and working. His projects and his legacy will live on in all of us as we all follow through on his work, as well as in the careers and destinies of his students and all the others whose lives he touched and influenced.

Professor Dame Georgina Mace