



**FRANK SAYS**  
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**LEFT:** Frank and Saba  
**BELOW:** Frank and his three daughters get hands-on



MEET...

# Frank Pope & Saba Douglas Hamilton

Frank Pope, COO of Save the Elephants, and his wildlife-filmmaker wife Saba Douglas-Hamilton, who now run the luxury Elephant Watch Camp on Kenya's northern frontier, are a busy couple. In between work commitments and raising their three daughters they are also the stars of a new ten-part observational documentary series *This Wild Life*, which follows the remarkable lives of both the human and animal families living in Kenya's Samburu National Reserve.

**Q** Frank, you used to work as a marine archaeologist and Ocean Correspondent for *The Times*, but you are now looking after the biggest land animals left on the planet. How did this come about?  
**FRANK:** The ocean is where I first discovered my passion for conservation. I spent several years working on shipwreck excavations, and later covered every topic from offshore energy to blue whales and deep-ocean exploration for *The*

*Times*. Naturally, I took Saba surfing on our first date! For a long time I felt the only true wilderness was the sea, until Saba introduced me to northern Kenya. I decided it was time for me to move ashore, which is when I started helping Saba's father with the conservation charity he founded, Save the Elephants. We work to secure a future for elephants and sustain the beauty and ecological integrity of the places they live in. The biggest threat to their survival at present is the ivory

poaching crisis, but long-term we're concerned about helping elephants thrive in a modern, developing Africa.

**Q** What is the current situation with regards to ivory poaching?  
**FRANK:** Sadly it's an on-going battle. The first 'holocaust' of Africa's elephants took place in the 1970s and '80s when over half the continent's population was killed in a decade. Thanks to an international ivory trade ban in 1989, a 20-year ceasefire allowed many populations to recover, but sadly things seem to be spiralling out of control again. Our research has shown that 100,000 elephants were killed in Africa between 2010 and 2012, and that the price of raw ivory in China has tripled in the last four years. But our hard work is beginning to pay off. In our core area in Samburu elephant births are starting to outnumber deaths for the first time since the poaching crisis

began in 2006. While Kenya's anti-poaching efforts seem to be paying off in certain areas, unfortunately the situation in the rest of Africa is pretty dire. Through our Elephant Crisis Fund - which works with NGOs and governments across the continent to stop the killing of elephants, stop the trafficking of ivory and stop the demand - we're helping to spread this success elsewhere in Africa.

to the elephant cause have influenced me profoundly. I was also lucky to grow up surrounded by incredible cultural diversity in Kenya, and my love for Africa's tribal cultures eventually metamorphosed into a master's degree in Social Anthropology with a thesis on the Bajuni people of Kiwayu island. It remains my favourite place on the Kenyan coast and the Bajuni are truly exceptional.

**Q** Saba, you were only six weeks old when you met your first elephant! Did this contribute to your passion to help secure a future for the wild world and cultures of Africa?  
**SABA:** Absolutely! I grew up bumping around in the back of a Land Rover as my dad, zoologist Dr Ian Douglas-Hamilton, pioneered the first-ever study of wild elephant social behaviour and later battled to save them from the illegal ivory trade. Watching how he acted around elephants I absorbed his manner and movements, learning initially to conquer my fear, to react appropriately and then to read the nuances of animal mood and behaviour. My parents' conservation philosophy and lifelong commitment

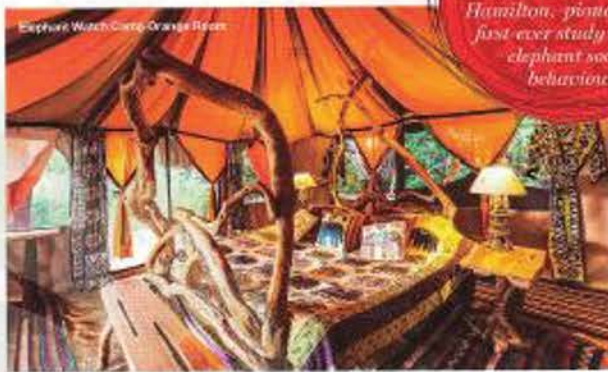
**Q** Why was the decision made to open Elephant Watch Camp?  
**SABA:** My mother, Chris, built Elephant Watch Camp in 2001 after having been inspired by a whale-watching trip to Canada. If people could be entranced by seeing the dorsal fin of a whale, she thought, then meeting wild elephants and being accepted into the heart of a family - an experience akin to swimming with wild dolphins - would simply knock their socks off. With a population of 500+ elephants roaming through Samburu, each of whom was individually known by our team at Save the Elephants, it was the ideal opportunity

to do something different. Elephant Watch is unique in giving visitors the same magical experience of elephants that we have daily as researchers, along with intimate insights into each individual's family history based on 18 years of detailed research. The camp itself is exquisitely beautiful, a fusion of luxury bush living and Bedouin bohemia, and is entirely open to the comings and goings of the animal world. It is the ultimate in eco - green to the core - making every effort to conserve water, source local goods and services, recycle old dead trees, minimise pollution (including visual and noise pollution), and work with the local nomadic community. Samburu is special too, being one of the very few places in the world where wild elephants slide so close by the side of your vehicle that you could reach out and touch them! (But of course, you mustn't!) The other great thing about staying at Elephant Watch is that you get the opportunity to give something back by contributing to elephant conservation.

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**Q** What was your favourite moment filming *This Wild Life*?

**SABA:** We ran the full gamut of emotions filming the series - happy, sad, humorous and excited. One of the best times for the kids was seeing the full drama of a hunt, as a lioness leapt onto the back of a zebra stallion, I slipped into automatic Big Cat Diary presenter mode, explaining what was going on, and the kids were transfixed as the zebra whirled around trying to dislodge the lioness. I wasn't quite sure how they'd react to the kill, but on discussing it later they were very open to both sides of the story and totally understood how important it was for the lioness to feed her cubs. There was definite sympathy for the zebra - along with a few mournful tears - but when the lioness padded off to bring her cubs and sister to the least everyone felt it was a well-deserved meal.



**THIS WILD LIFE WILL AIR ON BBC2 TOWARDS THE END OF APRIL 2015**  
To find out more about Elephant Watch Camp please visit [www.elephantwatchportofolia.com](http://www.elephantwatchportofolia.com). To donate to Save the Elephants, text ELEPH33 £5 to 70070 or visit [www.savetheelephants.org](http://www.savetheelephants.org) and make a difference today.