



Kids like me grew up with Douglas Adams. We had Blondie and Led Zeppelin posters on our bedroom walls (and some of us had a good smattering of rhino and tiger pictures as well), and we had 'The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy' on our bookshelf. That book helped shape my sense of humour; many of my oldest and best jokes are stolen straight from Douglas.

Jon Taylor | Managing Director,
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Celebrating Douglas Adams

I never met the great man as he was recording his *Last Chance To See* series about endangered species, or when he worked with Save the Rhino's founders in the 1990s. Since his untimely death in 2001, Save the Rhino has held a Douglas Adams Memorial Lecture to celebrate his life and further his conservation aspirations.

This year marked an important anniversary: 11 March 2022 would have been Douglas's seventieth birthday. The year also marked the first time in three years that Save the Rhino has been able to hold a physical event, and our very first hybrid event, with the activities on stage being streamed live to a worldwide audience. So it was that an unlikely and lovely mix of entertainers, comedians and conservationists gathered at the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) to try something that was new to all of us.

While a small and socially distanced audience gathered in the RGS's beautiful Ondaatje Lecture Theatre, our staff anxiously checked cameras and prepared to broadcast on the global internet. Angus Dunican opened the evening with wise words from Douglas on the hazards of charitable activities, after which the wonderful Rachel Wheeley took up her superb compering of the evening. Later, comedy continued when the Story Beast gave magnificent renditions of some of Douglas's poems, culminating in being joined onstage by the rarely seen



ballet 'Dancing Rhino in Tutu' (thanks to the brilliant Nell Thomas, *below*).

In the interval, people were able to visit a marvellous display of Douglas Adams memorabilia from the Cambridge archives, curated by Kevin Jon Davies, as well as an exhibition by the ZZ9 fan group.

A rhino ballet dancing on stage was one of the highlights of the 2022 Douglas Adams Memorial Lecture!





At the core of the evening were two fantastic conservation lectures. Dr Fay Clark of Anglia Ruskin University and the University of Bristol (left), who quoted Douglas Adams on the first page of her PhD thesis, gave a superb talk on the psychology and cognition of dolphins, and the many ways in which these wonderful animals are so similar, and yet so different, to us.



And E.J. Milner-Gulland, Tasso Leventis Professor of Biodiversity at the University of Oxford and Director of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Conservation Science (top right), gave a great talk on the importance of Conservation Optimism in times of so many environmental challenges.

entertainment and heavyweight conservation science was evident in the closing Q&A session with the conservation speakers, which would have gone on into the early hours had the RGS staff not needed to go home.

Perhaps most rewarding was hearing members of Douglas's family saying how much they had enjoyed the evening, leaving only one lingering concern for the Save the Rhino team – how do we top this?

Drawing from her own work on the conservation of Saiga antelope in Kazakhstan, E.J. highlighted the need to harness our optimism if we are to have a real conservation impact.

The success of this unlikely blend of hilarious

The 2022 Lecture was hosted by comedian and serial Douglas fan, Rachel Wheeley.

