

The Honorary Graduand: Dr Wendy Darke

The Orator: Dr Susan McMillan

Wendy Darke is to be awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Arts.

Born in 1965, Wendy grew up in the seaside town of Weston-super-Mare. At the age of 14, her imagination was captivated by the new BBC natural history blockbuster Life on Earth by Sir David Attenborough, which detailed the infinite variety of animal life. However, being a very visual person, it was the colourful coral reefs shown in the series that would become her special passion.

She attended Broad Oak Comprehensive School and Weston College of Further Education, where she chose to pursue her interest in the natural world and the great outdoors by studying Geology, Biology and Chemistry, which involved lots of field trips.

She then embarked on a Joint Honours Degree in Geology and Zoology at the University of Bristol, involving visits to the Pyrenees, Mallorca, Falmouth and Osmington Mills, Dorset.

Between 1988-91, Wendy was fortunate enough to receive a SERC-funded PhD scholarship to perform research based on the massive corals porites of the Great Barrier Reef with the Australian Institute of Marine Science and James Cook University.

She joined the BBC Natural History Unit in 1991 as a Researcher before progressing to Director and Producer, spending ten years travelling to film wildlife around the world, including swimming with elephants around the Andaman Islands, whale sharks off Ningaloo, Australia and walking with Lions in Zimbabwe.

As Executive Producer for the Children's programming department of the Natural History Unit between 2006-2012, she oversaw the production of many new series, including twotime BAFTA award-winning Deadly 60.

In 2012, Wendy became Head of the Natural History Unit, with editorial governance over its output and around 150 hours of programming annually. From ambitious landmark titles like Africa and Shark, to popular brands Springwatch, Natural World and Radio Four's Tweet of The Day, Wendy has overseen the production of more than 1,000 programmes during her career and is driven by a passion for developing lifelong relationships with and between people and the wonders of nature through the delivery of outstanding, neverbefore-seen wildlife content to audiences worldwide.

Wendy has two daughters with husband Stephen and, alongside her love of the natural world, her other big passion is tennis, which she enjoys playing with her family.

The Honorary Degree is awarded in recognition of Wendy Darke's inspirational achievement in bringing the Natural World to audiences worldwide.