

# Crocodile Hunter's Steve Irwin dies at 44

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Steve Irwin, the environmentalist and star of *The Crocodile Hunter*, died on Monday after an accident with a stingray near Cairns, Queensland in Australia, according to local Australian media. He was 44.

Irwin was filming an underwater documentary for his daughter's television show, by Port Douglas, Queensland around 11 a.m. Eastern Australian Time when he was struck by a stingray barb in the chest. While the stingray barb had penetrated the left side of his chest, the exact cause of death is still officially unknown. Steve Edmondson, a local diving operator, listed cardiac arrest from the injury as a possibility.

John Stainton, producer of Steve Irwin's Film Company, disclosed the information. "Steve decided to shoot a couple of segments for a new TV show that he's doing with his daughter Bindi and, with the cameramen, went out on to the reef at Batt Reef to do a little segment on stingrays. He came over the top of the stingray... and the stingray's barb went up and went into his chest and put a hole into his heart."

Ross Coleman of the University of Sydney Institute of Marine Science said it was rare for someone to die from contact with a stingray barb, and that he does not remember hearing of any similar incidents. He says that stingrays are "dangerous if provoked," and "as a recreational diving instructor you hear of people getting injured by standing on them ... but they rarely die."

The Queensland Ambulance Service said a call was received about 11 a.m. local time on Monday and an emergency services helicopter was flown to a boat on Batt Reef. Irwin was dead before medical attention arrived, and was pronounced dead at the scene.

Irwin's body is being flown to a morgue in Cairns where he will remain until he is formally identified.

He is survived by his wife Terri, who was believed to be exploring Cradle Mountain in Tasmania, as well as his children Bindi Sue, age 8, and Bob, age 2. They have been notified of Irwin's death.

## Reactions

Steve Irwin's death was considered to be very unexpected; Australian Prime Minister John Howard said he was "quite shocked and distressed at Steve Irwin's sudden, untimely and freakish death."

"It's a huge loss to Australia. He was a wonderful character. He was a passionate environmentalist. He brought joy and entertainment and excitement to millions of people," continued Howard.

Similarly, Mark O'Shea, a British zoologist, said that Irwin's death will "leave an immense hole," while Jeff Wilks of the University of Queensland called Irwin "a great ambassador."

John Stainton, Steve Irwin's manager, claimed he always feared that Irwin would lose his life while working in nature. He also stated that he's gotten into "close shaves" with Irwin, but regardless always feared that this day would come.

"You think about all the documentaries we've made and all the dangerous situations that we have been in, you always think 'Is this it, is this a day that maybe is his demise?'," asked Stainton, "We've been in some pretty close shaves. [But] nothing would ever scare Steve or would worry him. He didn't have a fear of death at all."

John said on *Croc One* today "The world has lost a great wildlife icon, a passionate conservationist and one of the proudest dads on the planet. He died doing what he loves best and left this world in a happy and peaceful state of mind. Steve would have said, 'Crocs Rule!'"

On MySpace, there is a bulletin in circulation that asks people to sign their name in honor of Steve Irwin. Note that the bulletin linked to may not feature the latest changes.