



# Howie Watkins Biography

Howie Watkins, best known for presenting BBC1's Really Wild Show, is a full-time broadcaster and "Performance Biologist". He divides his time between various television and radio projects, writing, campaigning for wildlife conservation and environmental organisations, lecturing and running the Art Alert Project, an environmental art co-operative. When not working, he indulges his passions for nature, music and reading. He lives in South Wales along with three snakes and a menagerie of creepy-crawlies.

Animals and nature have been life-long passions for Howie. His early years on the Island of North Uist in Scotland's Hebridean Isles may well have something to do with this. Free to explore at will with his dog Melanie he developed a fascination for the natural world that has never left him.

Howie graduated from Portsmouth Polytechnic in 1990 to find the world unprepared for a biologist quite like him - so he moved into a zoo, Pencynor Wildlife Park in South Wales.

He spent four years there as the Education Co-ordinator where he was involved in everything from helping to run captive breeding and public education programmes to aid endangered species to giving impromptu talks at animal feeding times, handling animals, running drama sessions and locking himself in empty enclosures (he claims this was to illustrate aspects of enclosure design).

Reluctantly, he left Pencynor in 1994 to give more time to his broadcast career.

## Broadcast Career

Howie worked on BBC1's long running wildlife programme *The Really Wild Show* from 1993 until 2000 (7 series). Howie has also been involved in a number of other projects for the BBC's Natural History Unit, including two series of *The Really Wild Guide to Britain* which toured the UK in search of wildlife and showed viewers how to get close to animals.

After leaving the Really Wild Show in 2000 Howie was kept busy filming two series of *Animal Planet Unleashed* for Discovery Animal Planet.

During 2001 Howie has been concentrating on writing and lecturing projects but has still squeezed in work for Channel 4, presenting their schools' programme *Stop, Look, Listen* and contributing a variety of news and current affairs programmes. Including *Earth & Space* for Now-tv and *Get Gardening* for HTV-Wales.

Recent work also includes, in 1999, filming *Crazy Creatures*, a series about animals - wild and domestic - and the people who live/work alongside them for HTV-Wales. Also in 1999 Howie filmed a series of inserts for a BBC-Science series about meteorology, *The Essential Guide to Weather*.

Other credits include; BBC2's daily series *The Countryside Hour*; BBC Education's *Science in Action*; BBC1's daytime series *The Complete Guide to the Twentieth Century*; *The Weather Show*, a daily programme on BBC1.



Howie has also acted as one of the judges and presenters for BBC *Country File's* competition in association with *The Radio Times* to find *The Photographer of the Year* in 1997 and 1998.

Howie has been a regular contributor to GMTV with a variety of reporting from live coverage of an oil spill on the Welsh coast to presenting an *Animal Week* in 1996.



## Stage Work

Away from TV, Howie has developed a number of one-man shows including *Beastly Behaviour*, a two-hour show for children (and their parents). He regularly tours the UK with a one-man show for the RSPB and provides a variety of teaching services to schools whenever his schedule allows.



Howie first got a taste for performing at school. A keen violinist and singer, he was a member of numerous choirs, orchestras and ensembles. He also sang opera professionally whilst at school. At university, Howie acted in, produced, and directed a number of student productions, including a critically acclaimed adaptation of Dario Fo's *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, along with performing the odd bit of stand-up comedy.



1997 saw Howie's first journey into the world of pantomime, playing *Wishee Washee* in *Aladdin* at the Assembly Rooms in Tunbridge Wells. His reviews included this from *The Stage* "...a thoroughly loveable *Wishee Washee* who clearly relishes this opportunity to use all his skills as an entertainer". In 1998 Howie played Jason, the Queen's henchman in *Snow White* at the Central Theatre, Chatham. 1999 saw a departure from the usual "friendly" roles that he is more associated with when he played one of Cinderella's Ugly Sisters in Hastings. He played Dame again in 2000, this time in *Snow White* at the Pavillion Theatre, Worthing.



## Writing

Howie writes features for a number of magazines including *Birdlife*, for young members of the RSPB and *SciTech*, a magazine aimed at teenagers with an interest in science.



## Art Alert

Howie co-ordinates The Art Alert Project, a collective of artists, designers, teachers and others all united by a desire to show that art isn't something done by *artists* in studios somewhere in *Art-Land*, but something we can all get involved with and enjoy.

Since the project started in 1990, Howie and the team have delivered everything from street theatre and stage shows to multi-day interactive performance art installations for a wide range of clients. All the projects have a conservation or environmental theme and use recycled materials.



## Contacts

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A handwritten signature of Howie.