Cheryl-Samantha MacSharry is a conservation photographer and programme manager for the Tropical Biology Association at the David Attenborough Building on Pembroke Street, part of the University of Cambridge.

Describing herself as a “photographer-writer-storyteller-scientist”, Sam Owen (Owen is her maiden name) is an award-winning photographer and fellow of the International League of Conservation Photographers (ILCP). She was mentored by National Geographic magazine photographer Joel Sartore and is represented by the prestigious Nature Picture Library.

Born on a coffee farm in Kenya, where she was raised apart from spells in the US and UK, Sam studied for a BSc Honours in business and environmental science at Imperial College, London, and then completed her studies with a first class Masters degree in conservation biology at the University of Cape Town.

She has documented much of her extraordinary life through her excellent photography and has had numerous adventures, including crossing a crocodile-infested river looking for Tana River Mangabeys – a highly endangered species of primate – in Kenya, studying

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Cheryl-Samantha MacSharry

who has previously worked with elephants. Sam was clearly pleased about China’s recent ivory ban. “We’re moving forward,” she observed. “Tying into Earth Optimism Day, as much as there are negative things in parts of the world, there is a tide of people moving forward, realising that it’s now – it’s not saying, ‘Oh, the next generation can fix this’.

“People are constantly telling me ‘We need to hit the schools’ and I get frustrated because although that’s grand, we need to hit adult behaviour right now.”

This is part of the thinking behind #EarthOptimism, a special day of events – taking place in cities all over the world on April 22 – designed to highlight all the good work being done to help the environment.

The David Attenborough Building will be hosting talks from a number of leading names, including Sir David Attenborough, Sir David Attenborough, Steven Pinker and Jane Goodall, and will be staging a hands-on Solutions Fair, where members of the public can learn more about what they can do to help the planet.

A keen conservationist, Sam – only began to take up photography seriously in 2004 while studying for her post-grad in Cambridge through the Cambridge Conservation Initiative - considers photography and writing, and I never really thought about doing it as a career because I never thought it was possible. “I was finding myself in amazing locations on amazing expeditions and felt very lucky just to be in places that not many people can get to. “I had my camera and photographed like mad, and people picked up on it and really liked my work.”

Although she has always carried a camera, Sam – a grand-niece of the First World War poet Wilfred Owen – only began to take up photography seriously in 2004 while studying for her post-grad in Cape Town.

“I started off mainly photographing animals,” she explained, “but I didn’t just want to be a wildlife photographer – I didn’t want to be put in that box.”

“I love sitting waiting for hours, like I did on Vancouver Island once in a swamp waiting for a beaver, but that’s not what I want to do every day because as much as the pictures are beautiful, you have to show the story.

“My biggest passion is telling the story. People are always asking me what my favourite animal is to photograph and I can’t say they’re all incredible.

“It’s about getting the story across and getting the human aspect for people to connect with that image.”

To learn more about Cheryl-Samantha’s photography, go to samowenphotography.com.

For more on #EarthOptimism Cambridge, turn to pages 22-23 and visit cambridgeconservation.org/earthoptimism.
Anglia Ruskin University photography students in the Lux-Aura collective are holding an auction of prints in Cambridge to help raise money for their summer exhibition.

The sale will take place at the Blue Moon pub in Norfolk Street on Thursday, April 27, from 5pm to 11pm.

The Lux-Aura collective is a group of students working towards their BA (Hons) photography degree at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge School of Art.

Their exhibition, which will take place at Free Range in Brick Lane, east London, unveils a multitude of individual projects covering a diverse collection of contemporary themes, making use of a wide array of image creation techniques.

1,600 calls for ambulances

Staff and volunteers at the region’s ambulance service were praised by their boss after a busy Easter weekend.

Call handlers in the East of England Ambulance Service Trust’s (EEAST) control rooms received more than 11,700 emergency calls from the region’s six counties – including 1,606 from Cambridgeshire - over the four-day weekend. Of these, over 8,500 resulted in a response from paramedics or first responders.

Robert Morton, EEAST’s chief executive officer, said: “My thanks to all of my colleagues and our volunteers for their hard work during another busy bank holiday.”

Record Store Day release

A limited edition two-track vinyl disc featuring a Cambridge band will be released to mark Record Store Day on Saturday.

The transparent flexi disc, which is thinner than a traditional record so produces a better sound, features Cambridge’s Saltfen and Bury St Edmunds-based SIAH.

Recorded by R*E*P*E*A*T in Arbury, Cambridge, You Flexi Thing Volume 2 will be officially launched at a free gig at Relevant Records on Saturday at 4pm.

Saltfen have been described as an innovative and exciting young band who have been drawing crowds across the region.

The vinyl will be available at record stores across the country and from repeatfanzine.bandcamp.com.

For more about Saltfen, visit facebook.com/saltfen.