

## Nature's Greatest Moments - Land (Series 2)

10 x 5 MINUTES

EPISODIC BREAKDOWN

### 1. Namib Desert Sidewinder

In Africa's harshest environment both hunter and hunted endure the extremes and only the fittest survive. Skillfully the Perengety's adder buries itself beneath the hot desert surface leaving only its tail as a worm-like lure to entice prey like shovel-snouted lizards or barking geckos. They approach unaware of the potential danger lying beneath the surface and fatal consequences of the snake's split-second attack and paralyzing venom.

### 2. The Nile Crocodile

For a juvenile crocodile in the Pongola River system, surviving through the critical period of infancy is a triumph of instinct. After intricate rituals of courtship and nest excavations the female crocodile lays her eggs in a sandy pit and vigilantly keeps guard of her clutch, forfeiting her own need for food until such time as the young are ready to leave the nursery. They emerge from the eggs simultaneously with squeaks and clicks, alerting their mother and encouraging each other. The mother tenderly mouth-lifts them and releases them in a concealed nursery where they immediately and instinctively begin to practice the technique of prey ambush that will sustain them for the rest of their lives. After about 6-8 weeks, the female's procreation duties are completed and maternal ties are severed.

### 3. Elephants harassing White Rhino

Conservation culling practices left young orphan elephant bulls undisciplined by the remarkable natural pachyderm matriarchal society. On hot African afternoons these bulls prefer to harass mud-bathing rhino incessantly, determined to dislodge them from their wallow in an absurd display of inter-specific dominance. The rhino's tolerate the bullying, intent on avoiding confrontation that has led to savage goring by the elephants large tusks before. Conservationists restored balance to this unstable relationship between the placid rhinos and aggressive elephant juveniles by introducing adult elephant bulls to install discipline amongst these delinquents.

### 4. Lions Kill a Giraffe

A pride of lions on the African bushveld constitute a perfect killing machine. Co-operation, stealth, perfect timing and an acute sense of opportunity work together in synchrony as lionesses surround and harass an old bull giraffe, which is unable to retaliate with the same agility as in his youth. The powerful legs kick out in all directions but are no deterrent for the master of the pride whose

masculine power reduces the proud giraffe to a hearty bushveld meal for the hungry pride, attended on the periphery by hyenas and vultures lured to the scene by the bush telegraph of opportunity.

## 5. Wildebeest Migration

The end of summer on the Serengeti plains heralds the mass migration of millions of wildebeest to fresh grazing in the north. Opportunist predators follow in their wake, targeting the stragglers on the outskirts. The thirst-driven animals reach the Grumeti River in the winter where they meet the cunning and stealth of some of Africa's largest crocodiles. These engorge themselves on the inexperienced young and the weak that venture too close or linger for too long beside the precious water. Remarkably the magnitude of the wildebeest herd is unaffected by the onslaught of greedy predators and they pass en masse to greener pastures leaving behind a chain of satisfied eco-links.

## 6. Rhino Fights

The white rhino is gregarious by nature. The complexity of rhino interaction and messaging is multifaceted and valuable in terms of survival. They communicate matters of rank, dominance, territory, courtship and kinship in an assorted vocabulary of vocalization, defecation-middens, urine marking, touch and posture. Family ties between mother and calf are affectionate and last a long time while the bulls are more assertive in their interaction with one another.

## 7. The Loggerhead Turtle

For loggerhead turtles, procreation occurs against unbelievable odds - only two of every 1000 tiny turtles hatched survive. They emerge from their subterranean incubation chambers above the high water mark on the same beaches that gave birth to their mothers. Although the little turtles hatch simultaneously for safety in numbers and during the cooler security of night, the stretch of sea sand to the ocean is riddled with lurking beach predators and once engulfed by the oceans waves, no respite is offered against sharks and other ocean predators. The passage to the Agulhus current is a hard one for the little creatures with only enough yolk to last five days. Latecomers are almost certainly doomed as they face the same battlefield by day, alone, and at the mercy of waiting ghost crabs.

## 8. Baby Rhino Birth

The white rhino populations of southern Africa remarkably continue to grow despite the sad history of poaching and slaughter. For a species that almost vanished from the earth, the birth of every infant is significant. This event is witnessed by amateur filmmakers who diligently wait out a cow's gestation to term, after witnessing the unique courtship and mating rituals of the adult pair. The newborn calf can stand in an hour and within two months is fully mobile and boisterously playful. At three months its horn begins to protrude, the very object of persecution subjected by the adult

rhino's only predator, greedy man. As an infant the baby is vulnerable to nature's predators but is aggressively protected by the entire herd and responds obediently to its mother's alarms.

## **9. Great White Shark Hunts a Seal**

This shark has the reputation of being the best and most powerful hunter. Nature's most feared predator attacks and kills a Cape fur seal basking on the surface of the ocean – reducing her life to a bloody feeding frenzy of sharks and gulls, leaving her newborn offspring abandoned and bleating its unique call from amidst a nursery of wailing pups on the shore.

## **10. A Leopard and her Cub**

The life of a leopard is a solitary one but for three days spent in a partnership of affectionate grooming followed at regular intervals by fierce copulation. The female retreats to her own territory for her 100 day term and then raises her cubs on her own leaving them to hide in various different refuges when she moves off to hunt. The danger lies in the inter-specific instinct of hyena and other bushveld predators to kill and thereby reduce all potential competition in overlapping territories. Every day a cub survives is testament to the feline mother's mastery of the bushveld and its harsh ways.