

off the fence.

Our Big Blue Backyard (Series 2)

5 x60'

EPISODIC BREAKDOWN

1. Kermadec Islands

Half way between New Zealand and Tonga, the volcanic Kermadec Islands rise dramatically from the depths. The only land for a thousand kilometres, they're like an oasis in a desert. Underwater caves provide refuge for an enormous spotted black grouper, who presides over the subtropical reef with stern authority and a flashy colour-change technique.

Comical Tasman boobies nest on exposed cliffs, racing to raise their chicks during a bountiful spring plankton bloom, whilst mother humpback whales stop off so their new-born calves can rest during their long journey to Antarctica. But with a thriving population of Galapagos and other sharks, the Kermadec Islands are far from safe...

Our Big Blue Backyard: Kermadec Islands connects the colourful lives of the reef residents as they feed, breed and flourish during the short window of the spring bloom extravaganza.

2. Fiordland

In the south-west corner of New Zealand, winter holds the rugged coast of Fiordland in its icy grip. Here, the sea has invaded the land, and deep-sea creatures flourish in the cold, dark depths of the regions' majestic fiords. Mysterious seven-gill sharks and ghostly black coral trees can be found 47kms inland!

But the frigid temperatures and the constant influx of fresh water make this season a life-and-death struggle for a pod of bottlenose dolphins, and changing ocean patterns could spell disaster for a pair of Fiordland crested penguins trying to raise their chick.

Our Big Blue Backyard: Fiordland explores an alien world, where beauty and terror lurk in the inky depth, while penguins and dolphins live vibrant lives near the surface.

3. Chatham Islands

Adrift in the Pacific, the Chatham Islands are a refuge for castaway creatures that “fall off” New Zealand’s mainland. Blue cod and starfish battle for supremacy over the rich paua beds, while a thriving seal colony lures migrating great white sharks. Albatross and other nomadic seabirds visit the Chatham Islands to breed, exposing them to the islands’ most notorious resident – the brown skua. The size of eagles, skuas are ruthless hunters, but these avian overlords don’t have things all their own way. Their chicks can be a handful... and the neighbours are an even bigger headache!

Against a background of rugged beauty, *Our Big Blue Backyard: Chatham Islands* reveals how powerful oceanic currents dictate life here, from bringing new colonists, and triggering a giant plankton bloom, to creating the weather itself!

4. White Island

Spewing noxious chemicals for the past 150,000 years, White Island is New Zealand’s most active volcano. But despite its toxic nature, this place is a haven for life.

Thousands of Australasian gannets flock here every summer to breed, but not all birds are instantly successful in courtship. A first time breeder gannet must pull out all the stops if he wants to win the affection of a mate.

Common dolphins roam the open ocean on the constant search for food. They’re hunting prey that follow the warm currents that flow south past White Island. A 6 month old dolphin must learn her pod’s hunting strategy if she is to survive, and local reef residents will seize any opportunity they can as the oceanic visitors arrive.

5. Banks Peninsula

In Banks Peninsula’s numerous bays, coves and lagoons which extend like a clenched fist into the Pacific Ocean, unique animals make their homes.

The smallest and rarest dolphins on the planet prefer the shallow bays, while the unique white-flipped penguins scale near vertical cliffs every day to feed their chicks. It’s time for the wetland birds to produce this year’s offspring; pukeko activate their communal system of egg incubation and chick care while a pair of paradise ducks discover a safe nest which will require their brand new hatchlings to make a dangerous leap of faith.

Through the rivers which flow from the mountains into the ocean around Banks Peninsula the extraordinary life cycle of New Zealand's unique longfin eel will be revealed, as a tiny glass eel begins its journey, and a huge ancient female completes the last grueling phase of her life.