

SER2023

Film Festival



Directed by Aaron Eger and Jillianne Segura

Program

Connecticut's Connection to the Sea -

The CT River and Atlantic Salmon

Rourou: The shared baskets

Mussel Mania -

Restoring New Zealand's Lost Mussel Reefs

From Mine Lands to Forests

Becoming Forest Trees

Shadow in the Reeds

Saving Gentle Giants

Cry Of The Glossy

Gardening Marine Forests -

A hands-on approach to restoration

Flowing - My dream of more freedom

Run Time: 1h 58m



DARWIN AUSTRALIA
SER2023

SER2023

DARWIN AUSTRALIA

Connecticut's Connection to the Sea - The CT River and Atlantic Salmon

This film is about where I live in Connecticut and what happened to the Atlantic Salmon that used to be plentiful in the Connecticut River. I interviewed Steve Gephard, a fisheries biologist for 42 years with the DEEP. He explained how climate change and people were responsible for the salmon disappearing from the river. He has also been working for his whole career on trying to bring them back. Now he's educating people like me about the former federal project and what can happen in the future for the salmon.

Director Biography: Jude is a 12 year old 7th grader at Groton Middle School in Mystic, CT. Inspired by a 2 day film making workshop he was encouraged to go out and create something and he did. Jude is now working on his next documentary in a longer format as well as several acting and voice over roles.

Judge's comments:

"Produced by a first time film maker and young actor. Very well done." Anita Diederichsen

Rourou: The shared baskets

Rourou explores the bringing together of western science and indigenous knowledge for restoration success.

Director Biography: Dr Nepia is the programme manager for 'People, Cities & Nature', a New Zealand-based research programme aimed at improving restoration success in urban areas.

Judge's comments:

"Amazing story telling how local people in New Zealand restored the landscape connectivity and also restored the human connection to their land. Very good use of local vocabulary." Anita Diederichsen

"This is a great video. The seamless interplay between Maori and English throughout; the great "key points" being pulled out and listed while people were making their comments; the same method being used to translate Maori words - nicely done. The emphasis of the story on the connection between people and nature was also very good." Bethanie Walder



SER 2023

DARWIN AUSTRALIA

Mussel Mania: Restoring New Zealand's Lost Mussel Reefs

Mussel reefs in New Zealand have been decimated by overharvesting. Now restoration projects are trying to bring them back.

Judge's comments:

"An important story told in a very effective way"
Julia Overton

"Great storytelling tactics, engaging for audience." Sam Chevallier

From Mine Lands to Forests

Mining and other resource extraction have significantly impacted the Central Appalachians. The Nature Conservancy and its partners are reforesting these lands for wildlife habitat, climate resiliency, and connectivity in a changing world.

Judge's comments:

"The video does a great job of elevating the importance of forest restoration being about more than just planting trees, but treating the whole ecosystem (including the soil), and planting a diversity of native plants, grasses, shrubs, trees, etc. From an ecological perspective it seems highly consistent with the SER Standards." Bethanie Walder

"Very well told story on the importance of restoration in the US." Anita Diederichsen

Becoming Forest Trees

Genpou Chisaka is a Japanese Zen Buddhist priest who has a deep love and respect for nature.

He realized that throughout Japan, large areas were abandoned by farmers and the local special Satoyama nature was immediately replaced by aggressive invasive exotic species of plants and animals.

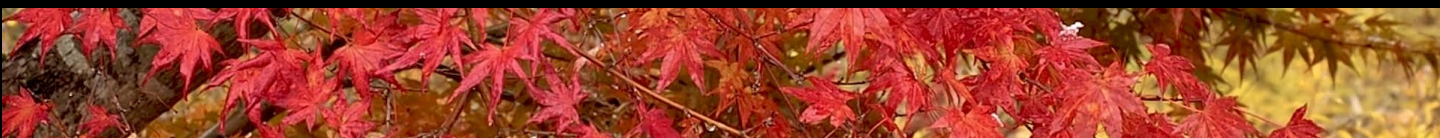
He also realized that in many places, the cemeteries became huge and full, forcing authorities to open new bigger and often in remote and inconvenient places.

This need to create new burials usually required to destroy more and more parts of nature.

Genpou Chisaka found a unique and a creative way to revive this diminishing rural Satoyama nature.

He decided to buy abandoned farmland in the heart of a rural area in Ichinoseki, Tohoku region (northern Japan) and to turn it into a new type of a burial.

It took a Sisyphean work to remove the invasive species and restore the original Satoyama nature. The new concept which enables him to do it is that the ashes of the deceased people are buried together with an indigenous plant. A simple wooden pillar marks the grave. Neither cement nor stones are used, and there is no need to destroy more natural lands to create burials. The burial's fee, which is relatively cheaper than the regular burials, is used to create a rich forest and many different habitats, a home for numerous species which are already considered on the edge of extinction in Japan.



SER2023

DARWIN AUSTRALIA

Becoming Forest Trees cont...

Director biography: Ran Levy-Yamamori is a documentary filmmaker, writer and producer based in Israel. Starting his career as a field biologist in Israel and Japan, Ran became involved in natural history television programs for major Japanese TV broadcasters including NHK, the National Japanese TV. His programs include documenting the unknown lives of desert wolves and wildlife, Nubian Ibex, Barn owls, vultures and others.

Judge's comments:

"This is a really interesting and unique film. The engagement of people from around the area to reconnect with and help restore nature through this burial system is fascinating, and it seems to be working. I am not sure how replicable it is throughout Japan, since it seems a very intensive program, but one that people very much appreciate." Bethanie Walder

Saving Gentle Giants

Laos was once known as the land of a million elephants, but the country's elephant population is in rapid decline. Now conservationists are working to reverse the trend as they try to save these gentle giants.

Judge's comments:

"Really nice presentation of the project, some of the challenges, some of the opportunities...the concerns about inbreeding is really good, as is the language about how important it is to get the people to love the elephants to save them." Bethanie Walder

"The video is very clear to understanding the problem for these elephants. Narration was well done, and audio is good. I enjoyed both a documentary style with the narration so good points for editing and storytelling tactics" Sam Chevallier

Shadow in the Reeds

One of Australia's rarest and most mysterious birds is disappearing across the country. Shadow in the Reeds captures the stories of the researchers, Traditional Owners, farmers and community members who are working together to save the Australasian Bittern and restore its wetland habitat.

Director biography:

Michael Portway is an acclaimed Melbourne-based filmmaker. His directorial work has been screened at local and international festivals, including the Berlinale and the Melbourne International Film Festival.

Tim Brown is an award-winning ecologist-turned-filmmaker. He is passionate about combining his love of the environment with filmmaking to create positive change for the natural world.

Judge's comments:

"Great film, strong story and impactful. The cinematography was really good, collecting the content of the bird was essential...Loved to see the change over three years, which is the impactful part of the film. Well done !!!" Sam Chevallier



SER2023

DARWIN AUSTRALIA

Cry of the Glossy

Taking us on a journey through the forested hills of the NSW Southern Highlands (Australia), poet and Gunai woman, Kirli Saunders, reflects on the special place the endangered Glossy Black Cockatoo holds in her heart and culture.

Director biography: Tim Brown is an award-winning ecologist-turned-filmmaker. He is passionate about combining his love of the environment with filmmaking to create positive change for the natural world.

Michael Portway is an acclaimed Melbourne-based filmmaker. His directorial work has been screened at local and international festivals, including the Berlinale and the Melbourne International Film Festival.

Judge's comments:

"An important story simply and clearly told"
Julia Overton

"This is a beautiful film. Having gone looking for, and actually found glossy black cockatoos, I was immediately drawn into the story. The connection between the she-oaks and the glossy black is made very well, linking habitat degradation and habitat restoration. The story also does a very good job of connecting restoration for the cockatoo with the culture and story lines of the people." Bethanie Walder



Director statement:

We were instantly enamoured with the Glossy Black-Cockatoo when we first saw them late one afternoon in far East Gippsland, after spending days searching for and failing to find them. At that time we had also come across Kirli Saunder's beautiful writings about Garrall, the black cockatoo. This seemed like some kind of sign and led us to reaching out to Kirli about making what became Cry of the Glossy.

Hearing the Glossy's cries echo through the forest at dusk is a surreal experience. As Kirli describes in the film, they've inspired stories which Aboriginal Australians have told for tens of thousands of years. So knowing their calls have disappeared from so much of the country carries a real heaviness.

It was important for the audience to feel this heaviness, but not despair. Through tonal shifts in the visual elements, sound and poetry excerpts from one of Kirli's books, we strived to create an arc of nostalgia, loss and hope. Ultimately we wanted to produce a film that conveys the enchanting nature of these birds, the sense of both personal and cultural loss when a species is threatened with extinction – and the potential to reverse environmental decline.



SER2023

DARWIN AUSTRALIA

Gardening Marine Forests: A hands-on approach to restoration

What if people could be the secret to transforming ocean deserts into rich forests filled with an abundance of life?

Join two marine scientists as they explore how a hands-on approach to marine restoration is working to revive marine kelp forests in South Korea.

During their trip, they witness how a deep connection with the ocean is inspiring change. In Korea, this connection runs across society, from a hundreds year old guild of female free divers to the Korea Fisheries Agency using the latest techniques to manage their kelp forests.

By recognising that while people may take from the sea, people can also take care of the sea, they are charting a new course to thriving kelp forests all around the world.

Director biography: Stefan Andrews is an accomplished marine biologist and filmmaker with over a decade of experience in the field of underwater cinematography. His passion for marine ecology and conservation has been the driving force behind his work, which focuses on communicating scientific research and environmental issues through compelling storytelling and stunning visuals.

Stefan's expertise as both a scientific diver and filmmaker has led to the creation of award-winning films. Through his work, Stefan has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to raising awareness about the urgent need to protect our oceans and the creatures that inhabit them.

Judge's comments:

"The visuals are beautiful, music is so well done. and narration is good to listen too. its difficult to not watch something that is so visually engaging" Samuel Chevallier

"Amazing video with beautiful footage and a very well structure narrative that leads all the way to the global kelp alliance." Anita Diederichsen

Director statement: I was approached by marine researchers Adriana Verges and Aaron Eger about the concept of the film and I was immediately hooked. What motivated me to be involved in this film was the urgent need to raise awareness about the importance of our kelp forests and to showcase how restoration efforts can make a significant impact in safeguarding these underwater forests for the future.

Our oceans are facing unprecedented threats due to human activities, and it is crucial that we take action to protect them. I believe that by highlighting the work of the Haenyeo and their role in restoring kelp forests, we can inspire people to take action and appreciate the cultural significance of the ocean and its inhabitants.

Through this film, I aim to inspire people to connect with the ocean and to understand the impact of our actions on kelp forests and why it is important to care for them. My motivation stems from a deep passion for kelp forests and a desire to share their beauty and wonder with the world, while also encouraging environmental responsibility.



SER2023

DARWIN AUSTRALIA

Flowing – My dream of more freedom

In "Flowing – My dream of more freedom" the river itself speaks to us about its dream of flowing wilder and freer again, thereby providing a home (again) to a diversity of species.

Rivers have always provided fundamental and vital services for mankind and the environment. However, dams, weirs and other obstacles disrupt the natural functioning of rivers and are detrimental to migrating fish and other river wildlife, and ultimately also to us humans.

Therefore, it is necessary to remove these barriers to return rivers to their natural, free-flowing state. Nothing lets a river ecosystem recover quicker than the removal of barriers. Let's listen to the river's voice and help our rivers, the arteries of our planet, to come back to full vibrating life!

Director biography: Marc Graf and Christine Sonvilla are award-winning photographers, filmmakers, storytellers, writers and speakers holding university degrees in biology and have a work focus on nature conservation and wildlife topics.

They have more than 12 years of experience in their field, have received accolades at Wildlife Photographer of the Year and other prestigious photography contests and have published around 200 stories in magazines including National Geographic, BBC Wildlife, GEO, Terre Sauvage or Terra Mater.

Judge's comments:

"An excellently made film telling the story in a distinctive way" Julia Overton

"Good flow and creative approach of bringing the river to life through a voice. approaching creative storytelling is key to unlocking peoples attention around important topics. it was also good to empathise with the river" Sam Chevallier

Director Statement

"Wild nature is no luxury we can afford when times are favourable but a must-have if we want to preserve the natural functioning and resilience of our ecosystems."



SER2023



DARWIN AUSTRALIA

Thank you to our judges

Tahsin Khan, Jadranka Nappi, Emmanuelle Bott, Fernando Sobral - UNSW

Amy McWilliam - Director of Reclaimed spaces

Birut Zemits - former Associate Dean Research for the College of Indigenous Futures, Education (CDU) and The Arts

Heather Jensen - Certified Ecological Restoration Practitioner

Raewyn Bennett - Mauri Development Researcher and Indigenous SERA member

Shauna Doll - Forest Conservation Program Director at Raincoast Conservation Foundation

Vijaykumar Mopuri - Ecological Restoration Practitioner/Researcher

Thank you to our Final Panel

Bethanie Walder - Bethanie joined the Society for Ecological Restoration as Executive Director in September 2015 and has more than 20 years' experience in environmental conservation, restoration and education.

Julie Overton - Julia has worked for Australia's national screen agencies assisting filmmakers in the development, financing, production and marketing of their projects specialising in the past five years in documentary.

Anita Diederichsen - Anita is WWF's Global Lead for Forest Landscape Restoration and the Coordinator of WWF's Area of Collective Action and Innovation Community in WWF. Anita is the WWF's Focal point and member of the Steering Committee of the Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration (GPFLR)

Sam Chevallier - Co founder of ReWild Africa, a film company that exists to support solutions for ecological restoration. ReWild Africa believe in working collaboratively with individuals and organisations which value both people and planet.



SER
2023

DARWIN
AUSTRALIA