



CRITICAL KINGDOMS

STORIES OF HOPE

3 x 50 min.

HD, 5.1 and Stereo

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TERRA MATER
Factual Studios

Our world is in the midst of its sixth mass extinction. Only this time, humans are the cause. From the sea to the sky, from deserts and jungles to mountains and lakes, Earth supports 8.7 million kinds of life. Its biodiversity stretches our imagination – even as our quest for raw materials shrinks its natural resources. An astounding ninety percent of species haven't even been named yet. If we don't scale back our environmental destruction, many will never be.

But all is not lost. In Critical Kingdoms, we visit fragile ecosystems around the globe to share stories of hope as scientists, governments, and selfless volunteers work tirelessly to pull species back from the brink of extinction and preserve our planet for future generations. Through spectacular locations, captivating storytelling, insightful interviews and eye-popping revelations, Critical Kingdoms will inform, entertain and inspire.

EP01: AUSTRALIA

Only recently, the coverage of huge forest fires sweeping through Australia shocked the world. Thousands of acres of wilderness and its inhabitants were consumed in a flash. But we've also seen locals come to the rescue, often risking their lives to save the animals, continuing an Australian tradition of caring for creatures. In this episode of Critical Kingdoms, we'll follow Stuart Blanche, planting the first of millions of trees in a crucial habitat for koalas; and Dana and Sam Mitchell and their tireless efforts at Kangaroo Island Wildlife Park. And we'll meet Skye Cameron, a conservationist safeguarding against future fires by combining ancient knowledge with modern technology.

Global climate change is one of the culprits behind these new, more intense blazes. Our use of fossil fuels also has a negative impact on the Great Barrier Reef, the largest living organism in the world. Overfishing, commercial mining and tourism hasn't helped. But now, ingenious efforts are underway to restore the coral reef to its former glory. Professor Peter Harrison of the Southern Cross University is looking into coral reef repopulation, while others are working at attacking one of the reefs' indigenous saboteurs, the Crown of Thorns starfish.

Above water, pilot Peter Gash and his family are restoring Lady Elliott Island using organic methods including composting and desalinating sea water with energy from solar panels. Working since 2005, they've made tremendous progress. The future's looking even brighter.

EP02: INDONESIA

Indonesia, an archipelago of thousands of islands, stretches 5,000 kilometres along the equator between Asia and Australia. Historically a vital source to the spice trade, today Indonesia is the largest economy in Southeast Asia. It's also unparalleled in the richness of its biodiversity, especially its jungles. This has proved to be a double-edged sword. Rainforests on the island of Borneo are under extreme threat from deforestation, mainly from the palm oil industry. As palm oil farming endangers the habitats of the gibbon, Chanee Kalaweit fights for their survival. He has established a rescue centre for injured animals, and started broadcasting success stories, calls for help and pop music in a spectacular mix via his own Borneo-based radio station, Radio Kalaweit.

The Indonesian island of Sulawesi is home to another endangered species, the Black Crested Macaque. Having endured centuries of deforestation and hunting, the last few thousand macaques now live in the protected area of Tangkoko National Park. Even so, they're still being poached for their meat, a longstanding local delicacy. But a new generation of native conservationists, like Reyni Palohonen, have started raising awareness of the macaques' plight among the local people, getting them to rethink their dietary traditions.

Under the sea, Manta Rays were over-hunted for their gills to supply the black market in China. Dolphins have been captured as circus entertainment. Sarah Lewis of the Indonesian Manta Project and Femke den Haas, a Dutch activist, are both fighting for these animals' return to the oceans.



EP03: AFRICA

Earth's last great wilderness is under threat like never before. From illegal mining and logging causing desertification, a rampant trade in animal parts, and the incursion of human settlements into the wild, Africa stands on the brink of ecological catastrophe. However, remarkable efforts are underway to reverse our human impact. We look at the growing illegal wildlife market and the modern technologies used to disrupt poachers in Kenya. We'll also meet local tribes that are bucking tradition and working to preserve endangered lions. Samuel Mutysia, director of the Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Kenya, and his colleague, William Njoroge, demonstrate FLIR, one of the newest methods to foil poachers. It's a surveillance system promoted by the WWF that has caused massive disruption to poaching expeditions.

We'll also follow the Cheetah's dramatic race against extinction in Namibia and the Horn of Africa. In 1990, American scientist Laurie Marker established the Cheetah Conservation Fund. Where once only 7,000 cheetahs were left in the wild, 30 successful years later, their numbers are on the rise. But success brings a new challenge: the illegal wildlife trade of living cubs.

Finally, we venture into the heart of Africa where efforts are being made to save the Mountain Gorilla population in Virunga National Park. Dr Martha Robbins tells of her efforts to raise awareness amongst the local population; to distract poachers; and to move international communities to acknowledge the problems the gorillas are facing. All in all, it's a story of hope and success: in 2018, the status of the mountain gorilla changed from Critically Endangered to Endangered. The fight continues.



NATURE