



BORN IN THE ROCKIES



Written and directed by **Joe Pontecorvo**
Executive producers: **Ivo Filatsch, Sabine Holzer**

2 x 50 min.
4K, 5.1 and Stereo



'Born in the Rockies' follows the lives of several courageous animal families, as they struggle to raise their young in one of the most challenging habitats on Earth – North America's Rocky Mountains. The film explores the secrets of family life, and reveals just how challenging it can be for a youngster, growing up in the Rockies. They must learn how to navigate their environment, understand the rules of their society, and face the challenges of a rapidly changing world. Step into the wild Rockies and see how legends are born!

The Rocky Mountains are the second largest mountain range on Earth – 4,800 kilometres in length. This formidable chain of mountains encompasses a hundred separate ranges from its southernmost point in the American Southwest, to its northern tip in the Canadian Arctic. And because of this, the Rockies encapsulate an astounding array of ecosystems – from prairie to Alpine tundra. Many of North America's greatest rivers originate in the Rockies, providing life-giving water to arid land and fresh drinking water to millions of homes. An ever-expanding population is placing increased pressure on wilderness, making the Rockies one of the last refuges for North America's most iconic species, including Rocky mountain bighorn sheep, Greater sandhill cranes, grizzly bears, and American bison.

In this epic two-part series, we follow the lives of several Rocky Mountain families as they find a home and raise their young. From infancy to independence, we unravel the story of the Rockies through the eyes of those born here.

EPISODE 1: FIRST STEPS

In episode one we introduce the vast diversity of the Rockies through the eyes of our animal families. From early spring to late summer we follow our new mothers through the early days of raising a family.

The film begins in the high desert of New Mexico as a family of cranes prepare for a thousand-mile journey across the Rockies to their natal grounds north of Yellowstone. The cranes' journey parallels so many families across the Rockies as mothers return to their birthing grounds to raise a new family.

A bison mother gives birth on the open plains with the constant threat of wolves lurking at the edge of the herd. At the base of a craggy cliff, a mother bighorn has an unusual surprise, twin lambs,

something exceedingly rare among Rocky Mountain bighorns. For this mom the challenges of motherhood will now be twice as hard.

For a grizzly mom with three spring cubs in the heart of Yellowstone, keeping them safe is the going concern. Grizzly mothers are tirelessly devoted to their cubs and will fight to the death to protect them. But devotion is not always enough, even for an experienced mom. In spring, large male grizzlies pose one of the greatest threats to a mother with spring cubs.

At the very top of the Rockies, there are very different set of lessons to learn. Young mountain goats must become proficient climbers quickly if they are to survive. These lessons can only be learned by doing, and these climbing games are something mountain goat kids relish. A critical skill to master before the harsh winter is upon them.

As spring moves to summer, our youngsters learn that childhood is about more than play, it is about becoming wild. Not only must you learn what to eat, but the rules of your society. For our bison calf this lesson comes the hard way. In the heat of the summer, he quickly finds himself in the middle of a dangerous game – the mating game. The bison rut is a critical time for mating, but a dangerous time for a young calf caught in the middle. With every step our youngsters take there are lessons to learn, lessons that will determine their survival as adults.

EPISODE 2: GROWING UP

In episode two we re-join some of our animal families and meet new ones, as we move through all four seasons of the Rockies. Our crane family takes us south across the Rockies as autumn unfolds in a riot of yellow and gold. Each of our families is busy preparing for a long hard winter by taking advantage of what greens remain.

NATURE



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In autumn, we meet a new grizzly mom and her four chubby cubs, as they pack on the pounds for winter. But this is no ordinary bear, her name is 399, and she is a legend in these parts. At 25 years of age, Bear 399 is the oldest known grizzly in North America. A grandmother many times over, she has become a symbol of the successful recovery of grizzly bears in the lower 48. But as we will see, her story is far from over.

In the southern Rockies, rapidly growing cities bump up against wilderness, fragmenting habitats, adding to an already challenging existence. But it also means animals must learn new skills to survive it. Coyote mothers teach a unique set of skills to their off-spring when raised in the suburbs of Colorado's most densely populated city – Denver. Youngsters are learning not only the rules of their society, but the cultural knowable needed to survive in the city.

Yet, throughout the Rockies, there are sanctuaries where new families have sought refuge. On a small ranch, in the heart of the Bitterroot Valley, a mother mountain lion stalks a wintry landscape with fluffy newborn kittens in tow. Safe from hunters and development, she can raise her kittens in relative safety. As winter unfolds, these youngsters will learn valuable lessons, critical for their first year of life.

For our young bison calf, this will be his first winter. He must learn to plow through snow so deep it can bury a car and withstand temperatures so cold, it

turns breath to ice. Although bison are built for the cold, their survival depends on the strength of the herd. Fifty percent of bison calves do not make it to their third birthday.

At 3,000 metres, our mountain goat kids must endure freezing winds as they navigate the icy cliff-sides of Glacier National Park. For an animal that lives on the very edge of existence, their rocky home is the greatest threat to their survival. Avalanches claim the lives of many mountain goats during the winter months, and those that survive are often emaciated by spring. A mountain goat's life is stressful due to the challenging environment they live in, and their tense social interactions. But pressures from hunting and habitat encroachment now threaten the existence of most mountain goat populations across the Rockies.

Most of our young families have survived the hard winter, including Bear 399 and her four yearlings. She has proven that wisdom truly does come with age. It has earned her the title of the Matriarch of the Tetons. This is how legends in the west are made.

For many youngsters this spring means the end of childhood, as they embark upon the winding road that is adulthood.

A co-production of THIRTEEN Productions LLC and Terra Mater Studios in association with PBS, CPB and WNET produced by Pontecorvo Productions

