



AN URBAN DILEMMA



find out more

HEALTHY CITIES MORE THAN HUMAN

Written and directed by **Heiko De Groot**
Executive producers: **Susanne Lummer, Sabine Holzer**
2 x 50 min., 4K, 5.1 and Stereo



Cities are like living organisms. Healthy and in perfect balance they can make their inhabitants happy, humans just as well as animals and plants. Thrown off balance, they get sick – and with them all the creatures living here.

Today's challenges put cities under a lot of pressure. Growing numbers of people and a capital investment boom are leading to a tremendous loss of green spaces, increased sealing of soils and a higher population density. The well-being of many cities is under threat. How can we keep them healthy or make them even healthier?

The prevailing opinion is that cities belong to the people and that "nature" is the place for animals. We tend to forget that we have long since turned the countryside into an agricultural desert in which neither animals nor plants can live and thrive. What's more, we urgently need to protect whatever remains of "nature" in our cities.

Little seems to be known about the importance of urban green space, not only for animals and plants, but for people. That's why this two-part series sets out in the search for answers. What are the consequences of rapid urbanisation for biodiversity, cities' ecosystems and people's health?

We set off into the world of animals that have escaped to the city and tell their stories. There are animals like hedgehogs or sand lizards that have disappeared from the agricultural landscape, but have found their home in the diverse mosaic of private gardens. Today, rhinoceros beetles mainly feed on compost and no longer on dead wood in forests.

These animals have adapted over time. Blackbirds sing louder and earlier in the morning to brave rush hour; urban foxes have grown shorter snouts for they no longer use them to catch mice but tear open plastic packaging. White-footed mice in New York can now digest fast food instead of whole grains.

The problems these animals are facing as a result of urbanisation can be measured. An extensive study on blue and great tits shows that the chances of survival of chicks decrease with each additional

percent of soil sealing. Fifty percent soil sealing means only half of the chicks will fledge.

Intriguing behavioural animal stories, sublime city shots and the exciting projects of proficient scientists will reveal amazing connections in an attractive and entertaining way and give us a new look at life in our cities.

A co-production of Terra Mater Studios and Federvieh in association with NDR/ARTE

