

NATURAL BONDS

LIVES INTERTWINED

Discover the fragile bonds between animals, people, and a threatened world.

Written and directed by **Alexander Sommer**

Executive producers: **Tom Synnatschke, Jörn Röver, Petra Lederhilger, Susanne Lummer**

A production of: **Terra Mater Studios, Doclights/NDR Naturfilm**

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RUNTIME & DEFINITION

2x 50 min., 4K

ESTIMATED DELIVERY

Q1 2027



COMPLEX RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS SOUTH AMERICA.

In stunning visuals, **Natural Bonds** takes the audience to remote corners of South America.

Over two episodes – one set in Peru, the other in Brazil – we explore the worlds of marvelous spatuletails, whale sharks, spectacled bears, capuchin monkeys, orchid bees and dolphins.

All play vital roles in their ecosystems – as pollinators, seed dispersers, or charismatic umbrella species whose protection ensures the survival of many lesser-known creatures.

While the focus is on nature and the animals' astonishing behaviours and interdependencies, humans are also part of these ecosystems.

Their efforts not only ensure wildlife survival but also enrich human lives in a symbiotic relationship.

Individual dedication to nature can mean the difference between extinction and survival, between flourishing and collapse.



EPISODE 1: PERU

In the eastern Andes lives a truly extraordinary bird. With its violet crown and absurdly long tail feathers ending in iridescent purple discs, the marvelous spatuletail seems plucked from the pages of a fairytale.

Conservationist Santos Montenegro, inspired by tourist birders, discovers that his ancestral land is home to this rare hummingbird. He places the land under protection, and since then many species that had vanished from the region have returned to his forest and are shown in sumptuous images and rare behaviour sequences: meet glasswing butterflies, glass frogs and night monkeys.

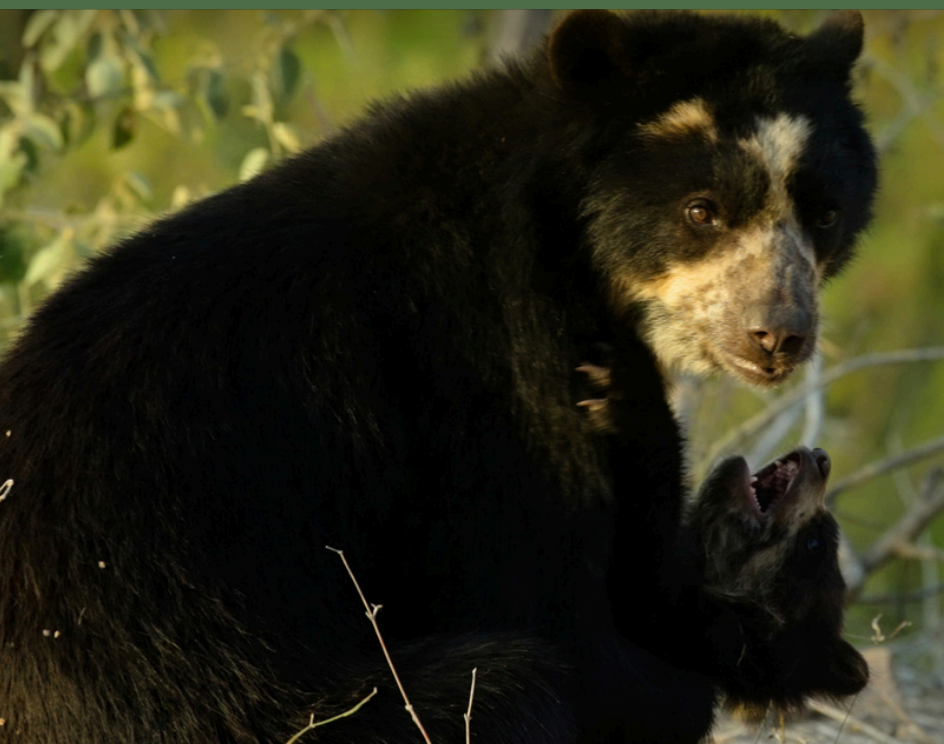
Peru's northern coast teems with life, thanks to the Humboldt current. Humpback whales, penguins, sea turtles, and swordfish thrive here.

The region also harbours one of the world's largest manta ray populations and massive gatherings of whale sharks. Yet, fishing and oil industries pose serious threats.

Marine biologist Alejandra Mendoza Pfennig campaigns for a protected marine area, with surprising support from local fishers.

With support from a Peruvian scientist, a local man named Lucas finds a way to safeguard the uplands that supply his village with water. Establishing a private nature reserve would give the community legal standing to resist the mining company.

When a rare blonde spectacled bear is sighted in the contested region, Lucas sees a chance to convince his neighbours to support the reserve. Proving the existence of the "Golden Bear" would be a scientific sensation and might garner enough attention to fund the project. Trained as a nature guide, he embarks on a mission to find the bear he once glimpsed through his binoculars.



EPISODE 2: BRAZIL

The Amazon rainforest is home to the greatest biodiversity on Earth. Here, no species lives in isolation – each is part of a complex web of interdependence. At the centre of this living network stands one iconic tree: the Brazil nut tree.

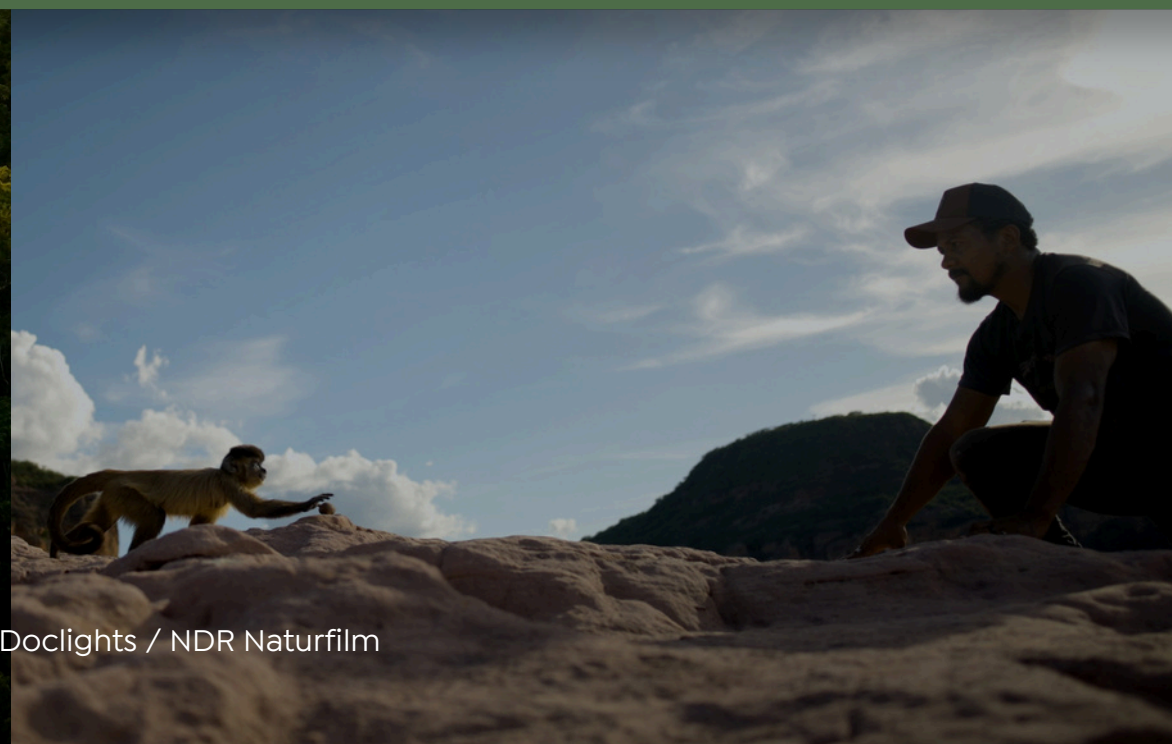
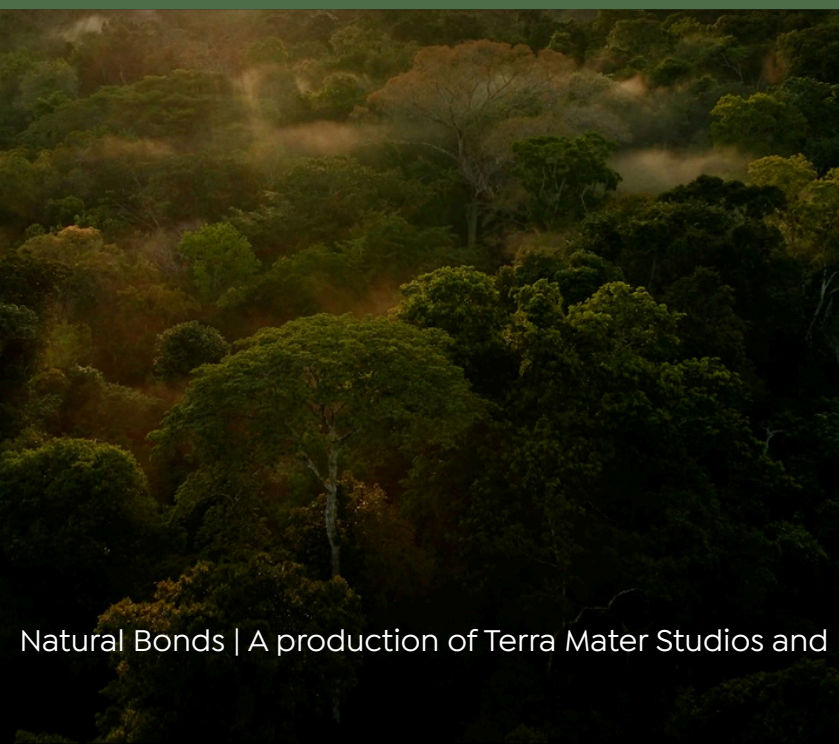
Only the agouti – a rodent – is capable of opening its hard nuts. The empty shells then serve as nurseries for poison dart frog tadpoles. The tree itself relies exclusively on the orchid bee for pollination – a species as demanding as it is rare. When young Brazil nut farmer Joao begins to understand these delicate connections, he realises what is at stake – he needs to save the trees.

Amid Brazil's red rock savannah, life adapts to harsh conditions. Maned wolves, rattlesnakes, and anteaters roam, while yellow-breasted macaws nest in cliffs. Capuchin monkeys here use tools to crack palm nuts.

Junio and his siblings have studied the monkeys since their childhood. We follow Junio and his father as they try to uncover the monkeys' spectacular sleeping site. So far, all they know is that the primates climb the cliffs of a table mountain each night. But on the far side of the mountain lies land owned by a neighbour. Dependent on traditional agriculture, he sees no alternative but to clear the land with fire – danger looms.

In Laguna, a coastal town in southern Brazil, lives a unique population of bottlenose dolphins – the so-called Laguna dolphins. For generations, they have been working side by side with Lucas and other local fishermen. Early in the morning, the dolphins seemingly playfully drive a school of fish toward the shore.

But this unique tradition is under threat. More and more dolphins are dying due to human activity. Speedboats, jet skis, and industrial fishermen with gillnets kill them again and again. If nothing changes, scientists predict the extinction of the “Laguna dolphins” – and the end of this tradition – within just six years.



WHY THIS PROJECT?

WHY THIS PROJECT NOW?

In our ever-changing world, we need positive examples. Everyone is able to change his/her environment for the better.

Individual dedication to nature can mean the difference between extinction and survival, between flourishing and collapse.

WHY PRODUCE IT WITH TERRA MATER STUDIOS?

TMS longstanding partnership with Doclights/NDR Naturfilm and their combined striving for visual excellence will make this two-parter a feast for the eye, enriched with fascinating animal behaviour and a human touch.

WHAT ANIMAL PROTAGONISTS WILL WE ENCOUNTER?

Over the course of two episodes, we will encounter dolphins, humpback whales, capuchin monkeys, bedazzling hummingbirds, spectacled bears, manta rays, whale sharks, poison dart frogs, agoutis, and many more.

SPECTACULAR CINEMATOGRAPHY

Through the distinctive visual storytelling of Alexander Sommer and Philipp Klein, the series transcends the typical reportage look, creating an emotional connection with viewers, offering a deeply immersive experience of South America's most remarkable regions.

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**We produce according to
our green guidelines.** 