Showreel Supporting Documents

Sequence 1: Great Grey Owls - The Great American Thaw (BBC)

Aim: To film a sequence of wild Great Grey Owls' hunting technique and courtship behaviour

Equipment and Techniques: Arri Amira and Canon CN20x50 (50-1000mm) lens

Comments: In spite of being one of the largest owls in the world, the Great Grey Owls were tricky to find and film. Their forest habitat was carpeted in a waist-deep layer of snow, which made looking for the birds and transporting kit rather awkward. We used expedition sledges and snowshoes to pull the heavy kit through the forest until we located the well camouflaged owls. The sub-zero temperatures reduced the battery life of an already power hungry setup, and the crepuscular nature of these birds meant that days were long and filled with brief periods of action following the owls as they flew through the forest, interspersed with long periods of waiting while they perched in the trees.

I was working as 2nd camera operator filming shots to help build a sequence. The Owls did very little during my time with them, but I feel the moments I filmed add to the sense of extreme cold in their habitat, as well as being useful to build the hunting sequence that was later filmed by the principal cameraman.

Sequence 2: Rock Pythons Hatching - Wild Sri Lanka (NatGeo)

Aim: To film a sequence about the life cycle of the Sri Lankan Rock Python

Equipment and Techniques: RED Epic 4K and a variety of macro lenses and straightscopes. Dedo lights. The eggs were filmed in a set on a "lazy susan" to provide movement to the scene.

Comments: This sequence was filmed as part of a month long shoot in the South West of Sri Lanka. Alongside filming the mother snake, an 18 foot Python, the major challenge of filming this sequence was a lack of knowledge about the how the eggs hatch. The eggs were due to hatch sometime during our shoot, so we were on standby with a plan to film them when they began to emerge. We received a call one evening from the animal rescue centre when the eggs first started to hatch, and sprang into action; however, none of the herpetologists we were working with was aware that it takes pythons two days to emerge fully after they first cut the egg with their teeth. Having waited patiently for 44 hours we finally filmed the young snakes emerging from their eggs.

The tenacity and determination to get the shot in this case really paid off. The forethought to set the eggs on a lazy susan also contributed to a beautiful, cinematic and successful sequence about a python's first few moments outside of the egg.

Sequence 3: Moonflower Opening - Wild Sri Lanka (NatGeo)

Aim: To film a Kadupul night flowering cactus blooming

Equipment: Canon 5DmkII, Intervalometer, Dedo lights

Comments: This sequence was an unplanned "bonus". The reptile rescue centre that we were using as our base and studio had a couple of Kadupul plants on their grounds, and they came into bloom during our stay. They are a beautiful and interesting cactus that only flowers for a small window each year, and each flower only blooms for one night. These flowers fitted in nicely with one of our night sequences, so we decided to film them, but didn't know how long it would take or

what they would look like when open. We set one flower up in our studio with a couple of gelled dedo lights to recreate moonlight, and a strong backlight to emphasise the delicate translucent petals. The first night was an experiment to find out how they opened, and over the following three nights we set up different shots with multiple cameras to create a successful time-lapse sequence which beautifully demonstrated the nocturnal elegance of these night blooming flowers.

Sequence 4: Red Ant mimic jumping spiders - Wild Sri Lanka - (NatGeo)

Aim: To film a behavioural sequence of the ant mimicking spiders

Equipment: Red Epic 4K, Micro and Macro lenses and bellows, LED lighting

Comments: These spiders are small! As with any macro sequence, the first challenge was getting enough light to get a reasonable depth of field. We used a few small LED panels in close to light these spiders. Another problem with jumping sliders is that they jump! We engineered the filming set so that the spiders had an area that they could display on, but also so there was nowhere for them to jump to, in order to make it slightly easier to handle and control them. The males would only display when they were matched in size and there was an unfertilised female nearby, so we had to control many variables in order to film this behaviour.

These stunning gladiatorial spiders are amazing ant mimics, and the male's battles for a female were very impressive. With a lot of tenacity and perseverance and a bit of clever set building, we managed to build a sequence that demonstrates these spiders' amazing disguise, and their pugnacious courtship behaviour.

Sequence 5: Adirondacks Scenics, American Martens sequence - The Hunt (BBC)

Aim: To film cinematic GVs to illustrate the winter forest habitat of the American Marten

Equipment: Sony F55 4K, Canon 16-35mm lens, Ladder dolly, EZ-Jib and slider

Comments: On this shoot in New York State, I was 2nd Camera Operator and Assistant. Every morning I would take the main camera operator to the hide by snowmobile, and then I would find good locations to film GVs from. The shoot brief was to have a lot of cinematic camera movement. One of the problems I encountered was that the dolly I was provided with was very impractical to use in the snow. I had to carry 2 sheets of 6'x4' plywood and a large dolly with me, so logistically I couldn't film far from the side of the road. Each shot took a few hours to set up, by which time the light had changed. So with a bit of ingenuity I repurposed a time-lapse slider into a portable dolly for the Sony F55. This made it possible to transport the kit by snowmobile, and so made it considerably easier to film beautiful cinematic shots that really helped to build the sequence and demonstrate the Martens' habitat.

Sequence 6: Margay Jumping - Big Cats (An Amazing Animal Family) (Sky1)

Aim: To illustrate the amazing arboreal skills of the Margay

Camera: Phantom Flex, Arri 5K lights

Comments: Margay spend 95% of their lives up in the trees and have evolved some amazing adaptations to enable this life in the air. This shoot set out to capture their amazing climbing skills and the adaptations that make this possible. This Margay had been trained to jump between branches in an enclosure, but in spite of the use of a captive animal we faced quite a few challenges. Firstly, as Margay are predominantly nocturnal we needed a lot of light, so we lit the

enclosure with a large 5K light and a few smaller lights for fill and background interest. The Margay was also rather temperamental and would only jump a couple times before getting “fed up”, so we could only film a few shots each evening. As a result, the sequence was built up slowly over the course of a week. Another challenge was the data management. The Phantom is very data heavy, so we had to download the footage often. We were using generator power out in Belize, and so I used a voltage regulator and UPS in order to ensure the safety and integrity of the rushes.
I feel that the carefully constructed sequence we successfully filmed beautifully demonstrates the Margay’s amazing abilities and physiological adaptations.

Sequence 7: Kiwis - Attenborough’s Big Birds (BBC)

Aim: To showcase the wonderful nocturnal world of the smallest remaining ratite, the Kiwi

Camera: Infrared converted Sony A7s, Bosch Aegis Infrared Lamps

Comments: We filmed the kiwis on Ponui Island in New Zealand. It has the highest density of Kiwi birds in the world, however they were still tricky to find and film. We were working alongside a team of researchers based on the island. Each evening they used radio data to give us the location of a kiwi. We would walk for at least an hour carrying the camera, car batteries, and a cumbersome infra-red lighting rig across rough terrain to the kiwi’s location. We waited for them to emerge then followed them around throughout the night as they foraged, called and mated. Over the course of a fortnight we got to know the Kiwis’ habits and were able to both predict and film a good variety of Kiwi behaviour, although there was behaviour we didn’t manage to film. The hours spent observing these birds in the wild helped us to showcase the smallest of the “big birds”

Sequence 8: Barbary Macaques - Primate Planet (Wildscreen Finalist - Newcomer Award)

Aim: To create a film to document the social behaviour of the Barbary Macaques of Morocco

Camera: 7D, Canon 100-400mm and slider

Comments: This short excerpt is taken from a film I produced and shot as part of my Masters degree. While filming, I tried to implement bluechip production values in spite of the fact that my budget was only £750! I shot this sequence to illustrate the macaques taking advantage of the new growth and wild flowers that appear as a brief interlude between the freezing winters and the scorching summers they experience in the Middle Atlas Mountains.
I used a slider both horizontally and vertically as a way to transition between sequences, and also to provide a cinematic sense of movement to what is essentially a static scene.
I acted as producer, director, cameraman and editor on this project so I gained a good overall understanding of the process of making a film. It taught me the value of building good relationships with scientists and local authorities, as well as the importance of shooting to give freedom in the edit. I also quickly understood the ability to remain flexible as plans change and expected behaviours don’t occur.
Overall I’m pleased with how the project turned out. There are things I would consider doing differently, but learnt a great deal from the experience and feel that it stood me in good stead for the subsequent years. I felt and still feel honoured that my film was recognised by the Wildscreen Panel.