

An HHMI Tangled Bank Studios/ Passion Planet Production



THE SERENGETI RULES

Directed by
Nicolas Brown

Produced by
David Allen
Run Time: 1:24

TheSerengetiRules.com

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#SerengetiRules #LearnTheRules

Publicity Contact:

Susan Engel – susan.engel@pmkbnc.com – 212-373-0114
Lee Meltzer – lee.meltzer@pmkbnc.com – 212-373-6142

Sales Agent:

Josh Braun - josh@submarine.com – 212-625-1410

LOG LINE

Exploring some of the most remote and spectacular places on Earth, five pioneering scientists make surprising discoveries that flip our understanding of nature on its head, and offer new hope for restoring our world.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Academy Award-winning Passion Pictures and HHMI Tangled Bank Studios present one of the most important but untold science stories of our time—a tale with profound implications for the fate of life on our planet. Beginning in the 1960s, a small band of young scientists headed out into the wilderness, driven by an insatiable curiosity about how nature works. Immersed in some of the most remote and spectacular places on Earth—from the majestic Serengeti to the Amazon jungle; from the Arctic Ocean to Pacific tide pools—they discovered a single set of rules that govern all life. Now in the twilight of their eminent careers, these five unsung heroes of modern ecology share the stories of their adventures, reveal how their pioneering work flipped our view of nature on its head, and give us a chance to reimagine the world as it could and should be.

SYNOPSIS

Academy Award-winning Passion Pictures and HHMI Tangled Bank Studios present one of the most important, but untold science stories of our time—a tale with profound implications for the fate of life on our planet.

Beginning in the 1960s, a small band of young scientists headed out into the wilderness, driven by an insatiable curiosity about how nature works. Immersed in some of the most remote and spectacular places on Earth—from the majestic Serengeti to the Amazon jungle; from the Arctic Ocean to Pacific tide pools—they discovered a single set of rules that govern all life. Now in the twilight of their eminent careers, these five unsung heroes of modern ecology—Bob Paine, Jim Estes, Mary Power, Tony Sinclair, and John Terborgh—share the stories of their adventures, and how their pioneering work flipped our view of nature on its head. Across the globe, they discovered that among the millions of species on our planet, some are far more important than others. They called these species “keystones,” because they hold the natural world together.

The role of keystones is both revelatory and surprising: sea otters help kelp forests flourish, supporting everything from salmon to eagles; wolves enable rivers to run clear and help forests thrive; and the humble wildebeest controls the numbers of trees, butterflies, elephants, and even giraffes on the savanna.

Unfortunately, these deep connections also work in reverse. When keystones are removed, ecosystems unravel and collapse—a phenomenon no one had imagined—or understood until their revolutionary discoveries. But with new knowledge also comes new hope, and these same visionaries reveal the remarkable resilience of nature—and how the rules they discovered can be used to upgrade and restore the natural world. They give us the chance to reimagine the world as it could and should be.

Based on the book by Sean B. Carroll, **The Serengeti Rules** will forever change the way we see nature. The film will be accompanied by a media and impact campaign to shine a light on restoration projects across the world.

DIRECTOR'S VISION - NICOLAS BROWN

Nothing could have prepared me for our first shoot. It was early 2016 and we had contacted Bob Paine about a daylong interview in June. He was cheerful and enthusiastic—he clearly loved to talk about ecology. Then on the 6th of May, Bob emailed us with terrible news— he had leukemia and it was terminal. But he also wrote, “I’m in very good spirits and very much looking forward to participating...”

Weeks later, on the 22nd of May we got an email from Bob’s daughter, Anne. She said Bob was unlikely to survive the night. I remember feeling crushed. We cancelled the shoot and considered cancelling the film. Thankfully, Bob didn’t die that night. Two days later, Anne called us again. Amazingly, Bob insisted on doing the interview. Anne was worried how severely the disease was affecting his skin and eyes.

What remained of Bob’s life could be counted in minutes. That he was willing to spend it with a film crew was astonishing to me. But it was clear that he saw his work as connected to something bigger than himself. The obvious discomfort he suffered speaking to us from a hospital bed, for him, was trivial. What mattered was his story.

During the day, Bob had maybe an hour where he could accept visitors, the rest of the time he spent in a near coma. The waiting room at the hospital was filled with Bob’s extended family and a “who’s who” list of ecologists and scientists, all lining up to pay their respects to this great man. Bob gave us a lion’s share of his time—20 minutes per day, for two consecutive days.

Bob’s story wasn’t about “saving the planet,” and I don’t think he embraced many “campaigns.” He was a scientist. For him, science was about experimentation and deep thinking. And in the end, I think, science for him was about love. Among Bob’s last words were:

What made this group so special is that each of us has a pretty private part of the world, some large, some small, which we understand and love. To know something intimately one recognizes change, and much of the secret of ecology today is to not only acknowledge change, but to begin to factor out causes. Why is the world we know so well changing?

A few days later Bob was gone. But with his words ringing in my ears, I was then given the extraordinary privilege of meeting the others in his group. More than that—I was able to film them in the places they love: Tony Sinclair’s Serengeti, Mary Power’s Oklahoma streams, John Terborgh’s Amazonian rainforest, Jim Estes’ Aleutian Islands.

This film is about more than the ecology of place. Collectively, the fact that scientists have found nature working the same way all over the planet tells us that Bob (and the others) discovered something fundamental about life. Predators and keystone species may become our greatest allies in the coming fight to protect our biosphere.

PRODUCER'S VISION - DAVID ALLEN

We find ourselves in strange and puzzling times; science is under attack like never before. News about the environment is too often marked by doom and gloom with a litany of seemingly unsurmountable challenges. Popular culture blazes forward, glamorizing youth and celebrity, seemingly unable to take the time needed to properly observe what is happening to the world all around us.

It's against this backdrop, that **The Serengeti Rules** takes an audacious stand. This feature documentary flies in the face of contemporary culture – almost defying it – from the outset this is plain to see by its choice of cast: five unsung ecologists in the twilight of their lives, one literally on his deathbed.

With extraordinarily detailed cinematography and sumptuous recreations we allow each character to delve deep into their past and relive their ever-evolving relationship with nature. Travelling to remote parts of the planet, as well as backyard streams and woodlands, **The Serengeti Rules** immerses viewers in a life-long pursuit to understand how nature works. And as our pioneers turn the scientific picture of nature on its head, like them, you too will start to see nature in a different way.

Their work helps confirm that across the planet, there are universal rules that stitch all ecosystems together. As they recount their life-time of observations, they highlight how our steady stripping out of species from the top of the food chain– in particular predators - can cause the environment around us to collapse to a lower denuded base level. It calls into question our attitude toward predators like big cats and wolves, and highlights the dangers of stripping 90 percent of predatory fish from the oceans. But more importantly, **The Serengeti Rules** is a story of hope and heart. Our characters reveal a much more exciting discovery, how using the rules of nature, we can upgrade the environment around us and begin to address some of the greatest environmental challenges of our time.

The film reveals the importance and the joy of scientific inquiry, and the rewards of a life well-lived.

FILM TEAM

DIRECTOR - NICOLAS BROWN

Nicolas Brown is one of the UK and USA's leading documentary filmmakers. He has won three Emmy awards, two BAFTA awards, and over 35 major festival awards in the USA, China, India, and Europe. For the past five years, he has worked for Passion Pictures as creative director of the Blue Media Lab – a media think tank dedicated to environmental filmmaking. He recently produced and directed two episodes of Passion's **Earth: A New**



Wild, which won a Panda Award at Wildscreen for "Best Series." Recently he directed National Geographic's award-winning Giant Screen film **Pandas 3D: The Journey Home**. A regular at the BBC, he directed the award-winning **Earth's Natural Wonders**, two episodes of the BAFTA-winning **Human Planet** and the multiple award-winning **Climate Chaos** with Sir David Attenborough. Nicolas' Discovery Channel film **The Truth About Global Warming** with Tom Brokaw won the Emmy for "Best Long Form Documentary." He has been invited to lecture in Central America about climate change by the UK foreign Office, and he has given presentations on filming "blue chip" Natural History in America and Germany, and is also co-author of the book **Human Planet** published by Random House and BBC Books. More information is available at www.nicolasbrown.org.

PRODUCER, PASSION PLANET - DAVID ALLEN

David Allen masterminds Passion Picture's output across landmark television and theatrical release documentaries. David has four Emmys and five Wildscreen Pandas to his name, he is recognized as one of the leading independent producer/directors in his field. In 1997, the Discovery and C4 series: **Bug World** earned him an Emmy for directing. His production for BBC, **My Life as a Turkey**, was described by the New York Times "as probably the best documentary of the year." This earned him his fourth Emmy and Wildscreen's coveted "Best of Festival" Panda. Most recently, David produced the award-winning landmark series for PBS, **Earth's New Wild**.

EDITOR - ANDY R. WORBOYS

Andy R. Worboys started his film editing career at BBC working on the scientific favorite, **Tomorrow's World**. His work covers a vast range of broadcast and corporate credits, both for the US and UK markets. This includes many of the BBC's flagship series such as **Horizon** and **Panorama**. Andy has worked on two highly acclaimed feature documentaries, BAFTA winning, **The Imposter** and The Grierson & Rose D'Or nominated **Inside the mind of Leonardo 3D**. He recently completed the Emmy nominated **Hillsborough**, which in 2017 picked up both BAFTA "Best Single Documentary" and BAFTA "Best Factual Editing."

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY - TIM CRAGG

Tim Cragg has been focusing on photographing theatrical feature documentaries for the last five years. Some of his most notable projects include “The Best Documentary” at the Sydney Film Festival in 2014, **35 Letters**. And **The Last Man On The Moon**, which premiered at the South by Southwest Film Festival in 2015 and then went onto Netflix. He has been in production on four feature theatrical documentaries that will be released between late 2017 and early 2018. These include **Damien Hirst - The Wreck From The Unbelievable**, **Three Identical Strangers** produced by RAW for CNN Films, Sundance, Ch4/ BFI, and **The Black Sea** produced by Black Sea Films. Tim has won a BAFTA for cinematography and has been nominated for two BAFTAs as well as an Emmy. He has worked on six films that have won BAFTAs and has worked on three films that have been nominated for Emmys.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER - DAVID ELISCO

For nearly three decades, David Elisco has built a reputation as an award-winning producer and executive known for science films with a distinctive flare. His work has taken him in search of compelling stories—from the north Atlantic, exploring the Titanic, to the jungles of Africa to investigate viruses, and to the rainforest of Peru to examine the ecological underpinnings of the web of life. His films have been distributed internationally and have appeared on PBS, NBC, Discovery Channel, Smithsonian Channel, and National Geographic. Highlights include the series **Strange Days on Planet Earth**, hosted by Academy Award nominee Edward Norton; **The Shape of Life**, an eight-hour series on the rise of the animal kingdom for PBS; and **Your Inner Fish** – also for PBS – a three-hour special based on the best-selling book by Neil Shubin.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER - DENNIS LIU

Dennis Liu has been producing media aimed at revealing the wonder, power, and joy of scientific discovery for over 20 years. He has worked with PBS on numerous programs and projects, including **NOVA ScienceNow**, NOVA Labs, The Fred Friendly Seminars, Annenberg Learner, PBS LearningMedia, and **Gorongosa Park: Rebirth of Paradise**.

BASED ON THE BOOK BY SEAN B. CARROLL

Sean B. Carroll is vice president for Science Education at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the largest private supporter of science education in the US, and Professor of Molecular Biology and Genetics at the University of Wisconsin. Carroll is also the author of “*Brave Genius, The Making of the Fittest*,” “*Endless Forms Most Beautiful*” and “*Remarkable Creatures*,” which was a finalist for the National Book Award for non-fiction. In 2016, he received the Lewis Thomas Prize for Writing about Science. An internationally recognized evolutionary biologist, Carroll has also received the Benjamin Franklin Medal in Life Sciences, and been elected a member of the National Academy of Sciences and the American Philosophical Society.

CONTRIBUTORS

ANTHONY R.E. SINCLAIR

Professor Anthony R.E. Sinclair was born in 1944 and raised in East Africa. He obtained a PhD from Oxford University in 1970. Sinclair's fascination of African nature brought him back to the continent in 1965 where he began his research on the Serengeti, work that spanned 52 years. He is now Professor Emeritus at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of London and the Royal Society of Canada and in 2013 he was awarded the Aldo Leopold medal from The Wildlife Society, USA.

Sinclair has conducted ecological research on the role of biodiversity in the functioning of ecosystems around the world including Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. His work in the Serengeti focused on how the ecosystem repaired itself after the catastrophic rinderpest disease of 1890. Because of his work we now have a better understanding of the role animal migrations, food shortage and predation play on the stability of an ecosystem, knowledge that can be used to restore ecosystems around the world.

ROBERT PAINE

Bob Paine (1933 - 2016) was a Harvard University graduate and earned his doctoral degree from the University of Michigan. In 1962, he began teaching at the University of Washington where he did his research for 36 years. After retirement, he continued his research and writing.

His most notable research was on the communities of the intertidal zone on Mukkah Bay Tatoosh Island, Wash. Paine discovered two fundamental ecological concepts - keystone species, when a species has an out-sized impact on communities, and trophic cascades, when creatures have strong indirect domino effects throughout a food chain.

Paine is one of the most honored ecologists of his generation. He received the 1983 Robert H. MacArthur Award from the Ecological Society of America, the 1996 Sewall Wright Award, and the 2013 International Cosmos Prize. He was also granted the Honorary Lifetime Membership Award from the American Society of Naturalists in 2009 and in 1986 he was elected to the National Academy of Sciences.

Peter Kareiva, director of the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at the UCLA, wrote of Dr. Paine: "He insisted on experiments in ecology at a time when others were content with simply explaining patterns. I think he turned ecology from quantitative natural history into a modern science."

JAMES A. ESTES

James A. Estes grew up in southern California and received his bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota in 1967 and doctorate from the University of Arizona in 1974. For most of his career, he worked as a research scientist for the US Geological Survey. In 2007, he retired from federal service and joined the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of California, Santa Cruz. His pioneering work on the role of sea otters as keystones in kelp forests is now a classic example of a trophic cascade. Estes has conducted research on coastal marine ecosystems in Alaska, California, Canada, Mexico, New Zealand and Russia. His most recent book, a memoir entitled "*Serendipity: An Ecologist's Quest to Understand Nature,*" was published in May 2016.

He is a Pew fellow in marine conservation, a Fellow of the California Academy of Sciences, and a member of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. He received the Western Society of Naturalist's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2011 and the American Society of Mammologists C. Hart Merriam Award for excellence in research in 2012.

MARY E. POWER

Mary E. Power is a professor in the Department of Integrative Biology at the University of California, Berkeley. She has studied food webs in temperate and tropical rivers, as well as linkages of rivers, watersheds and near-shore environments. Focal organisms include cyanobacteria, algae, invertebrates, fish, estuarine crustaceans and terrestrial grasshoppers, spiders, lizards, birds, and bats. By studying how key ecological interactions depend on landscape and temporal contexts, she and her students hope to learn how river-structured ecosystems will respond to change in climate, land use, and biota. Her group also collaborates closely with Earth and atmospheric scientists in site-based research to investigate linkages between rivers and the subsurface critical zones that mediate their flow regimes.

She was awarded an honorary doctorate by Umea University, the Kempe Medal for distinguished ecologist, the Hutchinson Award from the American Society of Limnologists and Oceanographers, and the Award of Excellence from the Society of Freshwater Science. She is a member of the California Academy of Science, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and National Academy of Sciences. She has served on the Editorial Boards of PNAS (2014 to present), Science (2006-2009), and Annual Reviews of Ecology, Evolution and Systematics (2011 to present). Power also served as President of the American Society of Naturalists, and of the Ecological Society of America. Since 1988, she has been the Faculty Director of the Angelo Coast Range Reserve in Mendocino, California.

JOHN TERBORGH

John Terborgh is James B. Duke Professor Emeritus of Environmental Science in Duke University and has current affiliations with the University of Florida – Gainesville and James Cook University, Cairns, Australia. His work focuses on tropical ecology, particularly plant-animal interactions and trophic cascades. He has conducted research in the West Indies, South America, Africa, Malaysia,

and New Guinea and has published around 300 articles and 8 books. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the National Academy of Sciences. He was awarded a Pew Fellowship In 1992 and became a MacArthur Fellow in the same year. He was awarded the Daniel Geraud Elliot Medal by the National Academy of Sciences in 1996. He has served on the boards of numerous conservation organizations and in 1999 he founded ParksWatch, an organization dedicated to monitoring and publicizing the status of parks in developing countries. He has remained active in research and conservation to the present.

PRODUCTION COMPANIES

ABOUT PASSION PLANET

Passion Pictures is a global production company with a worldwide reputation for its commercials, animation, feature documentaries and landmark television productions. With three Oscars, three BAFTAs, and numerous Emmy awards **Passion Pictures'** film and television department has a world-renowned output with notable titles including: Academy Award-winning **One day in September**, Academy Award-nominated **Restrepo**, Academy shortlisted **The Tillman Story** (Winner: Best Historical Doc Emmy 2012, BAFTA-winning **The Imposter**, Academy Award and BAFTA-winning **Searching For Sugar Man**, Golden Panda and Emmy-winning **My life as a Turkey**, and the Netflix original Academy Award-nominated **Winter On Fire**. Passion Planet is a department set up by four-time Emmy Award-winning producer/director David Allen to focus on natural history and specialist factual documentaries. **The Serengeti Rules** is Passion Planet's latest feature length production. Visit www.passion-pictures.com for more information.

ABOUT HHMI TANGLED BANK STUDIOS

HHMI Tangled Bank Studios is a production company established and funded by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute as an extension of its longstanding science education mission. The Institute is the largest private, nonprofit supporter of science education in the United States. Dedicated to the creation of original science documentaries for broadcast, theatrical and digital distribution, HHMI Tangled Bank Studios award-winning films address important contemporary issues and capture compelling stories of discovery across all branches of scientific inquiry. Recent films include **The Farthest – Voyager in Space**, Emmy Award-nominated **Spillover – Zika, Ebola & Beyond**, and GSCA Award-winning **Amazon Adventure**.

CREDITS

HHMI Tangled Bank Studios & Passion Planet present

A Film Directed by

Nicolas Brown

Produced by

David Allen

Executive Producer

David Guy Elisco

Executive Producers

Dennis WC Liu

John Battsek

Based on the book by

Sean B. Carroll

Film Editor

Andy R. Worboys

Director of Photography

Tim Cragg

Original Music

Anne Nikitin

Story Producer

Catherine Watling

Natural History Producer

Joe Loncraine

Line Producers

Sarah Cooper

Sinead Casey

Line Producer

Heather Forbes

Head of Production

George Chignell

Assistant Producer

David John

Production Coordinator

Skye McCann

Archive and Edit Coordinator

Christopher Gent

Assistant Editor

Luke Flight

Researcher

Bridget Conneely

FOR PASSION PLANET

Additional Coordinator

Cristina Palmer-Romero

Research Team

Amy Reeve

Hannah Rowland

Max Gray

Additional Research

Matt Brierley

Simon Goodall

Additional Edit Assistant

Edward Harber

Production Assistant

Jordan Smith

2D Designer/Composer

Jade Wheldon

Production Executive for Passion Pictures

Nicole Stott

Scientific Advisors

Bruce Menge
John Fryxell
Michael Heithaus

Cast

Bob Paine
Jim Estes
John Terborgh
Mary Power, Age 8
Mary Power, Age 33
Mary Power's Mother
Tony Sinclair

Matthieson McCrae
Jaime Excell
Johnathan Newport
Ashlyn Lopez
Samantha Nugent
Laurie Spiegel
Greg Kriek

Camera

Chris Openshaw
Hugh Campbell
Joe Riis
Nelson Hume
Ralph Bower
Rob Lyall
Robin Cox
Simon De Glanville
Thomas Curran
Tim Shepherd
Tom Fitz

Underwater Camera

Denis Lagrange
Florian Graner
Jeremy Monroe
Peter Kragh
Scott Snider

Drone Operators

Chris Curtis
Freddy Vergara
Jason Thompson
Mike Mitchell
Shane Moore
Shaun Macwilliams

Jimmy Jib Operator

Chris Lindeburg

Sound

Adam Prescod
Bill Rudolph
David Hechenberger
Gordon Glascock
Greg Breazeale
Henry Prentice
James Payne
Joe Giannotti
John Gooch
Justin Lacroix
Mark Iler
Mark Roberts
Ray Day
Ron Osioy

Gaffer

Andrew Thie
Andries Modise
Dennis Jones
Donny Avos
Jeff Vandermolen
Katiso Modise
Steve Colgrove

Grip

Alphie Manaka
Lucas Ramala
Mark French
Shiloh Eck

Camera Assistants

Austin Fulcher
Ben Dewey
Dominic Colchester
Hayden Peters
Jason Lord Castle
Jonathan Cummings
Kyle McBurnie
Leonard Rollin
Macaire Cox
Rhys Plume

Steven Donnelly
Steven McGee-Callender
Todd Kewley

Drone Assistants

Isaac Szabo
Matthew Kellam

Special Effects

Kyle Moore

Casting

Catharine Falcon
Sara Brown

Hair and Make Up

Caroline Walker
Hannah Chornoby
Jennifer Popochock
Kris Ravetto
Laura Wood
Nicole Fairfield
Shelly Jensen
Ute Moeller

Wardrobe

Florence Barrett
Jolandi Pienaar
Nerine Pienaar

Art Directors

Gavin Scates
Jennifer Peterson
Sophia Simensky

Art Department

AJ Scaff
David Hilton
Jake Parker
Patrick Martzen
Paul Martzen
Roy Winter
Steve Coleman
Tiaan Volschenk

Wim Schimmel

Medic

Mira Lisa Scharff
Sifiso Jim Masinga

Action Vehicles

Angelo Sotereanos
Dennis Martin
Keith Measures
Paul Lavigne

Stills Photographers

Eliza Powell
Japa Magyer
Laks Magyer
Stuart Conway

Location Support

Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge
Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior
Amie Robison
Ben Martinez
Bruce Parkhurst
Casey Pennock
Clayton Coates
Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge
Ian Smart
Jim Clark
John Ramsey
Kathleen Buckley
Kem Allen
Ken MaCalpine
Kent MacDonald
Litha Mbutuma
Lulu Pain
Michelle Cousin
Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
Olivier Stockman
Peggy Butler
Peter Jones
Phil Zerofski
Raymond Massey

Richard Leo
Rob Williams
Robyn Wiener
Rugged Point Lodge
Sky Hedden
Southern African Natural History Unit
Theuns De Wet
Tom Coulter
Tony Clouston
Tshepang Ramaboa
Veronika Bejar

1st Assistant Director

Bart Fouche

Local Assistant Producer

Francis Cordero

Animal Wranglers

Andrew Stephenson

Chris Newman

Sophie Adler

Theo Potgieter

Animal Welfare Consultant

Tim Wass, MBE

Production Assistants

Audrey O'Neil

Ben McDonald

Bud Conti

Campbell Diebolt

Greg Engleberg

Harvey Fretten

James Gardiner

Jamie Humphrey

Louise Mott

Michael McWilliam

Mongezi Pete

Nell Gordon-Hall

Oliver Massey

Rich Bentz

Rowan Sharp

Sammy Halabi

Sharon Sarpong
Wray Tellier

FOR HHMI TANGLED BANK STUDIOS

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Anne Tarrant

Director of Communications
Anna Irwin

Director of Public Outreach and Impact
Jared Lipworth

Executive Coordinator
Wilma Davis

Senior Manager of Public Outreach
Laura Helft

Director of Operations
Lori Beane

Production Manager
Lorri Garcia-Cottrell

Post Production Supervisors
Arjun Rao
Daniel Sheire
Indy Mitra

Development Researcher
Kevin McLean

Additional Research
Aline Waguespack Claytor

With Thanks

Allison Vincent
Amanda Callaghan
Anne Paine
Anne Sinclair
Art Beyer
Arthur Middleton

Jeremy Jackson
John Rubin
Justin Brashares
Keith Gido
Kyle Anderson
Laura Bonetta

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Ross Robertson
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San Diego Zoo Global
Sandra Wade Pauly

Bernie Krause	Laura Prugh	Sara Breaux
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Brandon Brown	Lisa Spitler	SCRIPPS Institute of Oceanography
Bret Ritland	Lucy Adler	Sea Eagle Boats Inc.
Brian Herwig	Mark Nielsen	Shirley Pakula
Cesar Flores Negrón	Marjee Chmiel	Simon Mduma
Daniel Pauly	Meredith Lewis	Siobhan Gray
Dave Pinel	Michael Soule	Susan Paine
David Hetherington	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Swebeswebe Wildlife Estate
David Kushner	Montana Film Office	Tao Eastham
Douglas Rasher	Nancy Paine	Terrie Williams
E.O. Wilson	Oklahoma Film and Music Office	Thomas MacDonell
Estació Biológica Cocha Cashu	Paola Bouley	Tobi Porter
Frederick Breaux	Parque Nacional Del Manu	University of Texas Libraries
Gary Ardon	Paul Dutton	Vasco Galante
Glen Worrall	Peru-Servicio Nacional de Areas	Veronica Chavez Ortiz
Greg Carr	Naturales Protegidas por el Estado	Walt Shubin
James Byrne	Peter Vorster	Washington Film Works
Jenna Hannigan	Peyton Breault	Will Stolzenburg
Jay Ritland	Rina Carcasole	William J. Matthews
Jeff Williams	Robert Fyumagwa	William J. McShea
	Robert Knight	Zachary Ladin

Additional Funding provided by Science Sandbox, an Initiative of the Simons Foundation

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 Dan Lebbin

Dawn Hart
Dawson Dunning
Day's Edge Productions
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Dusty Harpole
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Ernie Kovacs
Florian Graner/Sealife Productions
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John Knox
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William J. Ripple

Graphics & Animation by Passion Animation Studios

Director	Jake Mengers
Producer	Juliette Stern
Design & Animation	Niels Prayer
Executive Producers	Lucie Friar/ Debbie Crossup

Visual Effects

Blue Spill
Mick Connaire
Moonraker VFX

Illustrators

April Murray
Christopher Mayer

Music Supervisor

Gary Welch

Additional Archive Research

Clare Darken

Post Production Facilities

Molinare TV & Film

Post Production Manager

Charlotte Airth

DI Colorist

Chris Rodgers

DI Online Editors

Nick Anderson

Beren Croll

DI Coordinator

Theresa Crooks

Dialogue Editor

Claire Ellis

Sound Re-recording Mixer

George Foulgham

Assistant Re-recording Mixer

Chad Orororo

Sound Effects Editor

Jonny Crew, Wounded Buffalo Sound Studios

Transcription Services (UK)

Bye Jones Productions

Wickens Media Services

Production Accountant

Kendrah Matthews

Film Production Legal Services

Dermot Desmond, SmithDehn LLP

Jonathan Blair, Simkins LLP

Production Insurance

Brenda Mazariegos

Gabriela Padilla

John O'Sullivan

Natasha Boyne

Production Health and Safety

Fiona Drews, Remote Trauma

Original Music

Score Supervisor	Amanda Street for DNA Music Limited
Orchestrations	Tom Kelly, Jessica Jones, Anne Nikitin
Additional Music	Jessica Jones, Tom Kelly
Score Performed by	The City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra
Conducted by	Richard Hein
Score Recorded	Smecky Music Studio, Prague
Recording Engineer	Vitek Kral
Translator/Music Assistant	Stanja Vomackova
Session Supervisor & Orchestra Contractor	James Fitzpatrick for Tadlow Music
Score Recorded at	TYE London
Recording Engineer	Joe Rubel
Studio Manager	Sean Hargreaves
Studio Assistant	Harry Bryson
Piano	Tom Kelly
Guitars	Adam Double
Score Mixer	Joe Rubel
Assistant Score Mixer	Jack Sugden
Score Mixed at	Pixel

MUSIC 'Society'

Performed by Eddie Vedder

Written by Jerry Hannan

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