

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

The Power of Film to Foster a Conservation Ethic

Stephanie Flack · Wednesday, March 11th, 2015

Harnessing a Commitment to Conservation: *The Environmental Film Festival in the Nation's Capital*

The Environmental Film Festival in the Nation's Capital, the largest and longest-running environmental film festival in the United States, is set to launch its annual two-week celebration on March 17 in Washington, DC. A pioneering leader in showcasing the best in environmental film, the Festival, now in its 23rd year, offers fresh perspectives on a wide variety of environmental issues facing our planet. A major theme of this year's Festival is "Climate Connections," exploring the impact of climate change on our world. Known for the breadth and diversity of its offerings, the Festival presents films that focus on the grandeur of our natural world, endangered species issues, water and food security, energy, sustainable living and even built and created environments. The Festival provides the opportunity to travel to new places and see and learn new things – all through the lens of the environment and our relationship to it.



Anthem for the Amazon. Photo:
Amazon Aid Foundation

But beyond entertainment and diversion, our Festival seeks to illuminate vital environmental issues and advance public understanding of environmental challenges through the power of film. With its immediacy and emotional impact, film can move and motivate people like no other medium. Film has the ability to capture people's hearts and minds and engage them in matters of vital importance to current and future generations. For people to care, they need to be informed. Good films, delivered and interpreted well, can provoke thought and action and inspire personal and societal change.

To complement the compelling films, the Festival has scheduled dialogue with distinguished filmmakers, environmentalists, cultural leaders, and concerned citizens, whose perspectives all enhance the educational impact of the Festival. Collaboration with local, national and global organizations contributes to the interchange of ideas and a diversity of presenting partners brings new audiences.

With environmental threats growing in severity and scope, the time is right for harnessing the power of film to advance people's commitment to conservation. The need to act while there is still time is exemplified in the film *Racing Extinction*, which dramatizes the view of scientists that we are entering earth's sixth global mass extinction, a crisis driven by habitat loss, species exploitation

and climate change. While urgent, the film's underlying message is one of hope as it focuses on the power of images to bring about change – and how individuals can make a difference. The film is the winner of the Festival's Documentary Award for Environmental Advocacy.



Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret. Photo courtesy of the filmmakers.

In connection with our “Climate Connections” theme, the Festival is teaming with The Climate Reality Project to present the program “Filmmakers as Catalysts for Change,” considering the critical role of storytelling and film in raising public awareness of and commitment to addressing the climate crisis. We will also mark the annual international Earth Hour celebration in a special evening of film and discussion presented with World Wildlife Fund. *Ice & Sky*, a work-in-progress by Oscar-winning French filmmaker Luc Jacquet, is part of a multi-media educational program focused on addressing the impact of global warming. By shining a light on the global climate imperative, the Festival serves as a signpost on the “Road to Paris” 2015 United Nations Climate Conference.

Films can dazzle and divert, entertain and delight, but in the case of the Environmental Film Festival, they also have a larger purpose: to build a sustainable future for our world by advancing people's commitment to conservation and environmental protection.

The Environmental Film Festival in the Nation's Capital runs March 17 to 29, 2015. It will feature over 160 films at over 50 venues around the Washington D.C. area. This year's theme is CLIMATE CONNECTIONS. The complete Festival schedule is at www.dceff.org.

[embedvideo id="gY-zGB0lmOY" website="youtube"]



Tiger Tiger. Photo courtesy of White Mountain Films.



Landfill Harmonic. Photo courtesy of filmmakers.

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