

NATURE

press information



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THIRTEEN/WNET NEW YORK'S *NATURE* REVEALS THE FRAGILE LINK BETWEEN THE RED KNOT AND THE HORSESHOE CRAB, AND OUR INTEREST IN THEIR CONSERVATION, IN *CRASH: A TALE OF TWO SPECIES*, FEBRUARY 10 ON PBS

An HD Documentary From Emmy-Winning Filmmaker Allison Argo; Original Podcast Available At iTunes And *NATURE Online*

The humble horseshoe crab is an evolutionary marvel, virtually unchanged over the course of 350 million years. The small red knot shorebird each year undertakes one of the longest migrations of any species on Earth. The fascinating intersection of these two unassuming creatures and our role in their continued survival are explored in breathtaking footage, from the tip of South America to the Arctic, when *Crash: A Tale of Two Species* premieres Sunday, February 10, 2008 at 8 p.m. (ET) on PBS (check local listings). The film is available in High Definition. It is produced, written and narrated by Allison Argo (*Chimpanzees: An Unnatural History*, *The Urban Elephant*).

“We’re thrilled to work once more with Allison Argo, whose last two films for *NATURE* have both been recognized with Emmy Awards,” said Fred Kaufman, executive producer of *NATURE*. “*Crash* is a timely story, one that looks at the immediate fate of two amazing, interlinked creatures as well as the difficult economic factors involved in wildlife conservation.”

Horseshoe crabs’ annual spring spawning on the shores of the Delaware Bay, synched to the new and full moons when tides are highest, produces millions of eggs. The eggs in turn provide an essential refueling stop for the red knot on the nearly 10,000-mile journey from its

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wintering grounds in Tierra del Fuego to its breeding grounds in the Arctic.

But in the 1990s, while no one was counting, millions of horseshoe crabs were harvested – the preferred bait of booming mid-Atlantic eel and conch fisheries. It was the red knot that sounded the alarm when its numbers began to crash. Some scientists estimate horseshoe crabs in the Delaware Bay have dropped off by 75 percent in the last decade, while the red knot population that winters in Tierra del Fuego has plummeted by 70 percent in the last five years.

The red knots and commercial fishermen aren't the only ones who depend on horseshoe crabs. They've been valued by the biomedical community since the 1970s for their blood, which contains a unique clotting agent that is used in FDA-mandated testing of all intravenous drugs for bacteria. A quart of the crab's blue blood – it contains copper, not iron – is currently worth about \$15,000.

NATURE visits a Charleston, South Carolina lab where harvested crabs are bled before being released back into the water. The program features scientists in the field who are leading conservation efforts for the red knot and the horseshoe crab; fishermen whose livelihood was affected by a 2006 moratorium on harvesting crabs in the Delaware Bay; and researchers working to develop an artificial bait to replace crabs. *Crash* also offers mesmerizing macro-photography of maturing horseshoe crab embryos. Out of 80,000 eggs that a female lays in a season, 10 or fewer will survive to adulthood.

Now in its 26th season on PBS, *NATURE* has won more than 400 honors from the television industry, the international wildlife film community, parent groups, and environmental organizations – including 10 Emmys, two Peabodys and the first award given to a television program by the Sierra Club. In 2007, the series won Emmy Awards for *Chimpanzees: An Unnatural History* and *Christmas in Yellowstone*.

NATURE video podcasts, available on iTunes and at *NATURE Online* (www.pbs.org/nature), range from two to 10 minutes in length and feature behind-the-scenes

interviews with filmmakers and producers, program excerpts and outtakes.

Last season, to celebrate the series' silver anniversary, *NATURE Online* launched a redesigned and expanded Web site. In addition to the weekly video podcasts, new features include a newsletter, streaming video clips, an RSS feed, user bulletin boards and polls, new teacher lesson plans, photo slideshows, and more. Online social networkers can join the *NATURE* fan group at Facebook and keep up with the latest videos, photos, and more.

Crash: A Tale of Two Species is a Production of ArgoFilms and Thirteen/WNET New York. *NATURE* is produced by Thirteen/WNET New York for PBS. Fred Kaufman is executive producer; William Grant is executive-in-charge. Major corporate support for *NATURE* is provided by Canon U.S.A., Inc. and Toyota. Additional support is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the nation's public television stations.

The series is closed-captioned for the hearing-impaired and distributed with Descriptive Video Service (DVS) for the sight-impaired.

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Thirteen/WNET New York is one of the key program providers for public television, bringing such acclaimed series as *Nature*, *Great Performances*, *American Masters*, *Charlie Rose*, *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, *Wide Angle*, *Secrets of the Dead*, *NOW With David Brancaccio*, and *Cyberchase* – as well as the work of Bill Moyers – to audiences nationwide. As the flagship public broadcaster in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut metro area, Thirteen reaches millions of viewers each week, airing the best of American public television along with its own local productions such as *The Ethnic Heritage Specials*, *The Thirteen Walking Tours*, *New York Voices*, and *Reel New York*. Thirteen extends the impact of its television productions through educational and community outreach projects – including the Teaching and Learning Celebration – as well as Web sites and other digital media platforms. More information can be found at: www.thirteen.org.

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