

NATURE

media information



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NATURE EXPLORES THE MANY FACES OF VICTORIA FALLS, THE LARGEST WATERFALL ON EARTH

It is called “The Smoke That Thunders.” At the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe, the mighty Victoria Falls marks the spot where the Zambezi River reaches the edge of one world and plummets 350 feet into another. From late November to early April, up to 300,000 gallons of water cascades over the edge every second, creating towering clouds of spray and mist above the Batoka Gorge that can be seen for miles. THIRTEEN’s *Nature* series takes a personal look the worlds above and below the falls, much of it seen through the eyes of one man who has lived there all his life. *Nature’s Victoria Falls* premieres nationally Sunday, May 17, 2009 at 8 p.m. (ET) on PBS (check local listings).

Nature is a production of THIRTEEN in association with WNET.ORG – one of America’s most prolific and respected public media providers.

The waters around the falls hold few secrets for Mr. White, a fisherman who has lived by their side for all of his 74 years. The pools and eddies of the river must provide for his family even when the rains are heavy and the currents are fast and dangerous. There is not much company for him; many of the animals that rely on the river during the dry season spread out across the surrounding savannah during the rains and do not return until the river drops. But the baboons that

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live in the ribbon of rainforest along its edge are well-provided for. They relax and enjoy their time of plenty. When the dry season comes their world will become a much more difficult place.

By May, a transformation begins as the sun burns through the clouds, the thunder of the falls becomes a whisper and the river becomes lazy and shallow. Above the falls, animals of all kinds come in from the now-dry plains for food and drink. Hundreds of elephants gather to feast on fresh grasses and wallow in the cool waters, while hippos gather in every pool. Kingfishers and skimmers search the newly-revealed sandbanks and islands for places to nest. Fish eagle pairs reclaim their territories and call out to announce their return. Bee-eaters dig colonies of nests into the sides of the river bank, while quelea finches arrive in flocks millions strong and settle among the tall grasses. They must all raise their families before the rains return and the river rises again.

Down in the gorge, Mr. White sets his fishing lines in the quiet of the evening as the moon climbs high in the sky and moon rainbows appear. He will sometimes stay for a month at a time, fishing every night, watching the lights from Zimbabwe shining on the falls. It is a setting of great power and beauty.

The baboons have no such serenity. To feed themselves, they steal from the hundreds of people who cross into Zambia from Zimbabwe to buy food. At the border post, every vehicle and vulnerable individual is inspected by the border patrol of baboons, searching for easy targets.

The year comes full circle as the dry season ends. The elephants head back out to the savannah while the hippos fight among themselves in the few remaining channels and pools. All the chicks have learned to fly and fish and are ready to leave on their own when the clouds begin to gather. It is time for Victoria Falls to thunder once more.

Nature has won more than 450 honors from the television industry, the international wildlife film communities, and environmental organizations – including 10 Emmys, three Peabodys and the first award given to a television program by the Sierra Club. Most recently, the series won a Peabody Award for *Silence of the Bees*.

Nature's Victoria Falls is a production of Halcyon Media, BBC and THIRTEEN in association with WNET.ORG for PBS. Available in HD. 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 SC Johnson. Additional support is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the nation's public television stations.

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.

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New York public media company WNET.ORG is a pioneering provider of television and web content. The parent of Thirteen, WLIW21 and Creative News Group, WNET.ORG brings such acclaimed broadcast series and websites as Worldfocus, Nature, Great Performances, American Masters, Charlie Rose, Wide Angle, Secrets of the Dead, Religion & Ethics Newsweekly, Visions, Consuelo Mack WealthTrack, Wild Chronicles, Miffy and Friends, and Cyberchase to national and international audiences. Through its wide range of channels and platforms, WNET.ORG serves the entire New York City metro area with unique local productions, broadcasts and innovative educational and cultural projects. In all that it does, WNET.ORG pursues a single, overarching goal – to create media experiences of lasting significance for New York, America and the world. For more information, visit www.wnet.org.

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