

Exotic Homeland



Nature Documentary of the five-part series „Returning Wild Oases “

45 / 52 min

A film by Anne Mesecke

Exotic species conquer Germany. Faster and faster foreign animals and plants are entering our rivers, fields and forests. They surprise with their adaptability, disrupt well-established food chains – and eventually alter the lives of humans.

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SYNOPSIS (SHORT)

Some of them have lived among us for centuries. Others invade, right now, a world that has been alien to them so far – our homeland. Wild exotic species, strange animals and plants from afar make their way to Europe. Man himself is their bridge into the unknown. Once arrived, they don't just change the environment. They also alter the lives of humans. Relentlessly. The documentary takes a close look at a unique natural phenomenon. A phenomenon, which foreshadows future developments triggered by world-wide climatic changes and increasingly fast traffic routes.



THE FILM

This nature documentary tells the story of new animals and plants on several levels: Besides the story of their journeys and the changes they bring about in their new home, the film also explores how man copes with those new species. Therefore, the documentary accompanies an expedition by ship in search of a so far unknown North Sea invader. Such specific stories combined with an elaborate visualisation reveal unique insights into a world that has been hidden from most of us – up to now.

SYNOPSIS (LONG)



Some of them have lived among us for centuries. Others invade, right now, a world that has been alien to them so far – our homeland. Wild exotic species, strange animals and plants from afar make their way to Europe. Already today, hundreds of emerald parakeets breed in Heidelberg, tropical ants conquer our cities, Southamerican rheas live in Mecklenburg and giant hogweeds from Eastern Europe invade fields in North Rhine-Westphalia. Man himself is their bridge into the unknown. They travel easily on his global traffic routes. Secretely, they sneaked from the first seafarer´s ships or the botanical gardens into which man brought them himself. The documentary "Foreign Invaders" takes on a journey through a world in change. On this way, the film discovers ever new hideouts used by these varied immigrants. Together with scientists, "Foreign Invaders" takes off in search of the answer to the crucial question: What changes will these new species trigger?



The starting point of most of their journeys is the port of Hamburg. Coastal areas are particularly prone to the introduction of foreign animals or plants. It is here, where worldwide and north sea traffic routes meet. The trading ships bring the immigrants. Once these have landed in Hamburg or Bremen, it is not far to the mud flats. There, they invade one of the most delicate eco systems of Germany. Its inhabitants are extremely specialised. Even small changes in their environment disrupt whole food chains – a huge problem not only for nature but also for economy. If a new immigrant drives out indiginous species, this also poses problems for the fishing industry. A team of scientist pick up the trail of a foreign jelly fish. For two years now, it lives in droves in the Balltic Sea. But what does it eat? And consequently, which organisms are reduced and therefore missing from the food chains and the fishing nets? It only took two years for the jelly fish to move from the North Sea to the eastern coast of Rügen. So far, there seems to be no end to its journey.

Modern means of transport have shortened journeys and opened up a new dimension to the spread of exotic animals and plants. The invaders travel on tyres and car roofs. For some time now, they also travel by air. Cargo planes cross whole continents in just a matter of hours. And have introduced a new threat: invasive pests, animals that have no natural enemies in Europe. Leipzig is one of Europe's largest cargo hubs. The airport is busiest at night. A plane takes off or lands every five minutes, between 11 p.m. and 3 in the morning. Nowadays, there's no faster way to travel. Within the packages, tiny insects have come along for the ride. They've bored into wooden crates or nested in fruits and plants. This plane has flown from India. Just ten hours ago, its cargo was waiting on the tarmac of Delhi airport. Short enough for the little invaders to survive the journey well.

Whether by ship or plane, once the foreign invaders have reached their destination, they change their new home profoundly. They are imaginative survivors, especially apt at adapting to new living conditions. Well balanced food chains are deeply disrupted – a chaos which also affects profoundly the lives of humans. What is the source of their strength? How do they manage to survive, far away from their countries of origin, and even breed in droves? The film takes a look at a natural phenomenon of increasing importance in a globalised world. Moreover, it discovers a change that foreshadows future developments which worldwide climatic changes could trigger.



FESTIVALS

Jahorina Fest 2009, Bosnia-Herzegovina , November 2009

36th International Festival of Sustainable Development Films - ekotopfilm 2009, Bratislava, Slovakia , October 2009

3. Filmfest Wismar, October 2009

CineEco'2009, Lisboa, Portugal, October 2009

Greenscreen Film Festival, Eckernförde, September 2009

Environmental Film Festival, Washington D.C, USA, March 2011

THE SERIES

Wide parts of Europe rank among the most densely populated regions worldwide. Spaces for natural habitats diminish increasingly. Thousands of animal and plant species become rare or extinct. The principle reason for this is a growing lack of living space. Likewise, humans come to interfere in breeding areas and feeding grounds more and more.



Undisturbed and spacious areas become rare. But once in a while, natural habitats develop right there, in areas which have been cultivated to man's needs for decades, as for example in mining sites or army training grounds. Some of those seemingly hostile places become, after the humans are gone, special nature reserves, biosphere reserves and even national parks.



All those habitats have one thing in common: While they were intensely used by people, this usage at the same time excluded the public. Civilised, they yet remained untouched. For many, especially for endangered animals and plants, this is exactly their chance. They come to get used to machines or labouring humans and they learn that those pose no threat to them...



Mining areas, military training grounds, airports, stone pits or dockyards accommodate many kinds of plants and animals that won't find living space in other man-made landscapes. One example: Out of the 1.000 breeding areas of eagle owls in Germany, more than three quarters can be found in big stone pits. The vivid contrast between mechanization, its visual abstraction and architecture on the one hand and the animals which have found their new home there, renders those habitats, from the cinematic point of view, very attractive.



This documentary consists of five sequels, including the films: "In the Shadow of the Diggers" (produced in 2005), "In the Shadow of the Tanks" (produced in 2006), "In the Shadow of the Planes" (produced in 2007), "From the Death Stripe to the Vein of Life" (completed 2008) and „Foreign Invaders. How Exotic Animals and Plants Conquer New Habitats" (completed 2009).

CREW

A film by Anne Mesecke

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PRODUCTION DATES

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