



**ICONFILMS**

**PUBLICITY NOTES  
SECRETS OF WILD INDIA  
3 X 1 HR FOR NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC**

**Series Overview**

India is home to over a billion people with one fifth of the world's population on only 2% of the world's surface. Yet India still has a wild side, populated by giants, fierce predators, the rare and beautiful...all wrapped up in a land of extremes.

'Secrets of Wild India' celebrates the diversity and drama of India's extraordinarily varied landscape. In this three-part series, each episode focus' on one iconic ecosystem, a snapshot of how life works in each unique environment.

Packed with beauty, bizarre coalitions, hardship, death and new life, this series gives the viewer a front row seat to wildlife spectacles that are the jewels in the crown of Asian Natural History.

**Episode One - Elephant Kingdom**

Secreted away in the north eastern state of Assam, 100 miles south of the Himalayas are India's great plains. An incredibly rich land inhabited by an astonishing array of wildlife, and home to the subcontinent's last great herds of giant grazers.

Asian Elephants, as well as Wild buffalo and the One Horned Rhinoceros, dominate these plains. They are also home to the Bengal Tiger, the world's largest venomous snake - the King Cobra, countless bird species and a golden monkey.

Our story begins 18000 feet up the Himalayas at the source of one of the world's greatest rivers, the Brahmaputra. Fed by billions of drops of melting ice, it winds its way down from Tibet into India, rich with nutrients, bringing fertility and fecundity to the plains. Ensuring that even through the unforgiving relentless heat and months of drought this land somehow provides food for these giant grazers.

We follow a family of elephants and their newborn calf. Only hours old she was born under the cover of darkness in the seclusion of a forest. From her first tentative steps, to her first foray onto the plains, we track her as she faces six months of drought, fire and flood.

During that time these plains are transformed from grassland, to desert and eventually with the arrival of the monsoon to a wetland, which sparks an exodus of the grazers as they forced to higher ground.

This region is one of the last places on earth where many of these species still come into contact with each other. There are unique stand-offs between otters and rhinos. Endangered wild pigs, come face to face with giant constricting pythons, and India's only ape welcomes the dawn with an ethereal song, one that has never been heard the few miles across the river by the stunning Golden Langur.

This is a land more African than Asian. A world of unexpected contrasts and endless variety, that is unique to India and the world.

### **Episode Two - Desert Lions**

This is the real story of the jungles made famous in Rudyard Kipling's 'Jungle Book'. It is a battlefield where life hangs in a delicate balance of intricate behaviours and collaborations. A place ruled by tooth and claw, where large numbers of species fight for space, water, food, and above all sex.

This is a world that knows nothing of compassion or kindness, dominated by two of the world's top predators, the Bengal Tiger and the Indian Wild Dog or Dhole. Following these protagonists we gain a better understanding of what it takes to survive in these most inhospitable jungles.

Both have adopted completely different strategies for survival. The tiger is a stealth hunter that stalks its prey. The dogs are packs hunters, chasing prey until it collapses exhausted and dies. The cat uses massive canines and kills by suffocation. The dogs tear their prey to pieces.

At the heart of this jungle a huge male tiger dominates the biggest waterhole for miles around. This is the only pool which will not completely dry up in the coming months. It is the prime spot and he controls it. He drinks when and where he wants.

A young Dhole couple have broken away from the clan to set on their own and mate. They will pair for life, a risky strategy, as they will find it difficult to catch enough prey to survive.

In order to survive, prey too has been forced to set up strange alliances and develop an armoury of sensors including acute hearing, an incredible sense of smell and if they don't work, an astonishing turn of speed and agility needed to outrun the predators.

Hidden away in the surrounding jungles, younger males wait for their turn to challenge the dominant male for his position, and his access to the greatest amount of prey and the maximum number of females.

This story of life and death is played out over the long hot dry period. There is no rain for six months and temperatures top 120F. Prey is forced to take more and more risks in order to survive.

Kipling's Jungle Book was fiction. This is hard fact and a story that rewrites itself every year.

### Episode 3 - Jungle Lions

At first glance the desert of India's north-west appear devoid of life. But even in the most hostile environments wildlife thrives. This is as inhospitable a place to live as anywhere on earth, where only the best adapted survive. Here, in the harsh deserts and salty drylands, live India's specialists. They have to endure extreme hardship, sandstorms, droughts, and intense heat.

These deserts are also home to rare and elusive predators found nowhere else on earth, including the world's rarest big cat, the critically endangered Asiatic Lion. Elusive leopards and secretive desert cats eek out an existence amongst the sands, eating anything they come across.

It is also home to extraordinary grazers like the arid adapted Asiatic wild ass, and one of the world's fastest terrestrial mammals, the Blackbuck. But even at 50 miles per hour, the Blackbuck isn't immune to the cunning and skill of the rare Indian wolf that specializes in killing this rare antelope. Some species never drink, others chose a life underground.

Plants such as the Khejri tree, known locally as "King of the Desert" can send roots 100 feet below the surface and offer shelter for some, food for others. In the skies, vultures soar high above the trees looking for the next kill and using their incredible sight to soar down on anything dead or dying. Out here, you eat whatever you can find.

The indigenous people call it 'marusthali' literally meaning 'region of death'. No other desert on earth is as densely populated as the Indian Desert and animals now have to live alongside this growing population. But for many these animals are of holy importance, revered and protected and a central part of their Hindu beliefs. In a land of extremes, it is the adaptability of nature, combined with the reverence of the Indian people that mean that wildlife can continue to survive in this most hostile of environments.

## TOP FACTS FOR SECRETS OF WILD INDIA

### Episode 1 - Elephant Kingdom

1. Asian elephants have to drink over 20 gallons of water every day, which means especially in the summer, they are constantly on the move
2. [http://www.honolulu zoo.org/indian\\_elephant.htm](http://www.honolulu zoo.org/indian_elephant.htm)
3. The longest of all living venomous snakes, the king cobra (*Ophiophagus hannah*) has an unusual habit amongst snakes.... of eating other snakes. The majority are non-venomous species, such as small pythons, although highly venomous species, such as cobras, kraits and even other king cobras, are readily eaten
4. <http://www.arkive.org/king-cobra/ophiophagus-hannah/#text=Biology>

5. During certain stages of their lives, male Asian elephant go into a period called Musth, where they become extremely aggressive and will turn on almost anything that gets in its way. During this time their testosterone levels can be 20 times their normal level
6. <http://www.arkive.org/asian-elephant/elephas-maximus/#text=Biology>
7. The Indian Rhino is the largest of all the Asian rhinos. The bond between mother and calf is an extremely strong and the calf will remain with the mother for up to 4 years. They have an intimate relationship with the little mynah bird, who is the cleaner in the relationship, picking of ticks and cleaning wounds.  
<http://www.arkive.org/indian-rhinoceros/rhinoceros-unicornis/#text=Biology>
8. The Brahmaputra river is one of Indias great rivers and twists and turns for 2900km. Unlike virtually every other river in India, this one is considered male, not female  
[http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-10-21/news/27598153\\_1\\_river-raft-assam-valley](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-10-21/news/27598153_1_river-raft-assam-valley)
9. Fig trees are an essential part of many animals' lifes in Indian Forests. They rely on a tiny wasp, just one sixteenth of an inch to pollinate them, and each fig species has a specific wasp.
10. The smooth coated otter is Asias largest otter. Unlike other otters, these are unusually social and can be observed in large groups together. Though it is formidable in the wild, in some parts of India and Bangladesh, local fisherman have used this otter to help them catch their own fish.  
<http://www.arkive.org/smooth-coated-otter/lutrogale-perspicillata/#text=Biology>  
<http://www.bioone.org/doi/abs/10.1644/786.1?journalCode=mmsp>
11. The Asian Wild buffalo is one of Indias giants, and one of its most dangerous animals. Growing to well over 2000 pounds, it has the largest horns of any animal, growing to over 6 feet  
<http://www.arkive.org/asian-buffalo/bubalus-bubalis/#text=Biology>  
*Animal Records by Mark Carwardine*
12. The Indian Rock Python is an absolutely massive snake. The longest measured was 19ft 2 in and one specimen weighed 200lbs. They can eat many different animals, killing them by constriction, not venom. This includes included frogs, toads, monitor lizards, wild ducks, peafowl, poultry, rats, hare, porcupine, langur, jackal, mousedeer, hogdeer, chital, sambar fawn, barking deer, chinkara, and leopard.  
The Book of Indian Reptiles and Amphibians by J. C Daniel
13. The Hoolock Gibbon is one of Indias rarest animals. It moves through the tree canopy using just its arms in a mode of movement called Brachiation. From the tree tops, they sing, a very distinctive call that can be heard from over 1km away.  
[http://pin.primate.wisc.edu/factsheets/entry/hoolock\\_gibbon](http://pin.primate.wisc.edu/factsheets/entry/hoolock_gibbon)

14. The golden Langur is restricted to the North side of the Brahmaputra and was only officially recognized by science in 1954. Even now very little is known about this elusive animal, possibly Indias most striking of inhabitants.  
Ecology and Conservation of the Golden Langur, *Trachypithecus geei*, in Assam, India  
Arun Srivastava *Primate Heritage Inc.*, Bikaner, India *SOFTEXEL Inc.*, New Jersey, USA
15. The Indian Rhino can stand 6 feet at the shoulder and weigh in at 4000lb  
<http://www.rhinos-irf.org/indian/>
16. An eagle has eyesight which is 8 times better than ours, which in real terms means they can spot a rabbit in flight from over 2km away.  
Eagles by Rebecca L. Grambo
17. The fish eagles talons lock into its prey - a vice-like grip that prevents it wriggling free. As the fish struggles, they act like a ratchet getting tighter and tighter.  
<http://raptortrust.org.uk/what-is-a-raptor/diurnal-raptors/the-feet/>
18. Surprisingly for a bird that spends so much time in the water, cormorant feathers are not actually waterproof so need regular drying and attention.  
<http://dnr.wi.gov/wnrmag/html/stories/2008/feb08/Cormorant.htm>

## Episode 2 - Desert Lions

1. The common Langur and Chital deer have formed an unlikely relationship. The chital deer will gather underneath the trees of feeding langurs and collect the fruit that the monkeys knock down. The chital also benefit from the langurs treetop view of any approaching predators.  
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1439-0310.1989.tb00522.x/abstract>
2. Though deer do have a degree of color vision, what they do lack is the ability to identify orange when amongst green. This gives a distinct advantage to the tiger when it is stalking its favorite prey, the Sambar deer.  
<http://www.fieldandstream.com/articles/hunting/2003/06/what-deer-see>
3. The Indian Wild Dog, also known as the Dhole is considered one of Indias most efficient predators. Unlike Tigers that hunt alone, the Dhole work as a coordinated team, communicating using a series of distinct whistles and chirps.  
*Canids: Foxes, Wolves, Jackals and Dogs - 2004 Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan IUCN*
4. The Dhole are merciless when killing. Unlike the tiger that kills quickly with a bite to the neck, the dhole each take bites of the prey, often resulting is a death from blood loss or shock  
*Canids: Foxes, Wolves, Jackals and Dogs - 2004 Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan IUCN*

5. The Tiger is India's biggest cat, reaching 3m (10ft) in length and 227kg (500lbs) in weight. They are built to kill and are able to kill prey up to 1000kg (2200lbs). *Tigers and their prey: predicting carnivore densities from prey abundance*. K.Ullas Karanth, James D. Nichols, N.Sambar Kumar, William A.Link, and James E. Hines. PNAS April 6 2004
6. Though tigers are highly evolved hunters, it's thought that only one in twenty hunts end in a successful kill  
<http://www.seaworld.org/infobooks/tiger/diettiger.html>
7. When hunting, tigers will use the vegetation to creep as close as possible to their prey. When they break from cover, their claws will automatically unsheath as they lunge onto the deer or other animal they are pursuing. If it is a small deer, they will bite the back of the neck, severing or crushing the vertebrae. If something larger like a Sambar deer, they will bite the throat, crushing the wind pipe. *Tiger predatory behavior, ecology and conservation*. John Seidensticker and Charles McDougal. *Symp.zool.soc.Lond (1993) No.65:105 - 125*
8. The dhole are very dependent on each other for survival. There will be one female and male who breed in the pack only. When the young are born (up to 12), the whole pack contribute to raising them, regurgitating meat. A young dhole can start eating meat at 3 weeks.  
**Canids: Foxes, Wolves, Jackals and Dogs - 2004 Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan IUCN**
9. The cicada is an insect found throughout much of India. It is famous for the extremely loud noise it can make when many emit in unison. This can reach levels of 120db, thought to be loud enough to potential predators such as birds, from approaching.  
<http://australianmuseum.net.au/Cicadas-Superfamily-Cicadoidea>
10. There are many ants found in the forests of central India, including the fire ant *Solenopsis Geminata*. The nests can contain hundreds of thousands of workers and these are capable of overwhelming and killing prey 100 times their size, including young birds and rats.  
<http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/files/pests/invasive-ants/tropical-fire-ants/tropical-fire-ant-risk-assessment.pdf>
11. The Gaur, found in the forests of central India, is one of the largest wild cattle in the world, reaching over 2 metres (6.6ft) at the shoulder and weighing in at one ton.  
Field Guide to Indian Mammals by Vivek Menon
12. Chital are one of the prettiest deer of central India, also known as spotted deer. They are a favorite food for the predators of the forests, but they're not completely defenseless. Large antlers, hard hooves and running at speeds of forty miles per hour, it takes a lot of skill to catch these, and many times tigers and dholes are unsuccessful.

[http://www.theanimalfiles.com/mammals/hoofed\\_mammals/chital.html](http://www.theanimalfiles.com/mammals/hoofed_mammals/chital.html)

13. As well as the Tiger and Dhole, the central Indian forests are home to the Sloth bear. It might weight up to 145kg (320lbs), but one of its favorite foods is ants. Using its long claws, the bear can suck out insects by suction.  
Field Guide to Indian Mammals by Vivek Menon
14. The sambar deer, that can grow to 1.5m (5feet) at the shoulder and 320 kg (704lbs), is Indias largest deer. They are the favorite prey of the Bengal tiger in the forests.  
Field Guide to Indian Mammals by Vivek Menon
15. The common Langur, also known as the Hanuman langur, is one of the real characters of the forests.They form large groups of between 11 and 64 individuals, and their is much interaction between members.  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/wildfacts/factfiles/321.shtml>

### Episode 3 - Jungle Lions

1. The Indian Asiatic Ass are only found in Indias' North West, and live on the salt plains of the Little Raan of Kutch. As the monsoon approaches, the ass get increasingly excited as the breeding season begins. The males battle to keep harems of females. Depending on the conditions, these can vary in size. In a good year, a male may have up to 150 but if rains are poor and the vegetation low then harem sizes are smaller, more like 30 - 50. If unlucky, a male go his whole life without breeding.
2. The wild ass might look stocky, but they are speed demons, chasing each other across the plains at speeds of up to 43 mph.
3. The male peacock is one of the most flamboyant of all birds. However, what looks like its tail, is not. This is in fact something called the trail, and is formed from feathers from high up the peacocks back. When they are up and on full display, they can span 2m / 6ft.
4. In the north west of India, there is a sign of the arriving monsoon that many locals are familar with. The multicolored Indian Pitta is one of Indias most stunning birds, and arrives just before the monsoons. But exactly where it arrives from still remains a mystery.
5. The asiatic lion is a close cousin of the African lion, but has certain key differences. Running along the bottom of its belly, the males have a thick fold of skin, they have a less thick mane and they also live more separate lives, wondering around as nomads or in small groups only occasionally visiting the females.
6. Though they might be a little smaller than their African cousins, they still have a formiddable diet, able to consume up to 40 kg / 88lbs of meat in one sitting. Due to

the India forests being more enclosed and less open than Africa plains, they have adopted more ambush techniques for hunting, getting very close to the prey before a final burst of speed.

7. The desert fox is a native to India. Its sandy color is perfect for the arid conditions and its large ears act like radiators, allowing heat to leave the body. They have a diverse diet that can include insects such as termites and grasshoppers, birds, eggs, rodents, snakes and even the freshly produced droppings of sheep!
8. The desert cat is a little known felid that can live in some of the most dry and arid habitats of India. Though they will drink when water is available, they are able to survive for long periods without water, obtaining all they need from the animals they eat, which can include insects, rodents and lizards. They are even able to jump of 6ft / 2m to grab birds out of the sky, such as skylarks.
9. The Demoiselle crane makes a yearly stop in the small village of Keechan in North West India. As many as 10,000 of these cranes arrive each year, fed daily on up to 500kg / 1100lbs grain by the local village people. The cranes travel nearly 2000 miles at altitudes of up to 26,000 feet.
10. The Indian blackbuck, once widespread throughout India, is now isolated to small patches. It once lived alongside the Indian Cheetah, and this is reflected in its speed, capable of running up to 50 mph (80kmph)
11. When Blackbuck males fight, the idea is not to stab or kill the opponent. They are actually wrestling, each male trying to put the other off balance. When this is achieved, the other concedes. However, occasionally males do die in the fight. This can either be as a result of a stab wound or sometimes the horns become entangled, stopping them from feeding, in which case they starve to death.
12. The Indian Wolf is a scrawnier version of its relative the Timber Wolf. However, it is still an efficient killer. When hunting for the Indian Antelope, otherwise known as the Blackbuck, they actually target the male adults, not the fawns. This is because the male blackbuck are so occupied with courting and so weak from the effort, they are an easy target.
13. A pack of Indian wolves might eat 2900kg or 6380lbs of meat / year, 2560kg or 5632lbs of which is the Indian Antelope, or Blackbuck.
14. In the deserts of North West India, the lesser and greater flamingo can be found filtering minute organisms from the super salty waters. They can filter out organisms 200th of an inch long. When the females are raising their chick, they raise them on a fluid that they produce from their throats that includes their own blood.



15. The leopard is found through India and is the most adaptable of the big cats. Dietary analysis has shown that they can eat up to 100 different prey species, and in times of food scarcity, can sustain themselves on invertebrates.