

Documentary Notes and Comments

Here are some of the thoughts and comments I had, both while making the films and in hindsight. I also include the what I learned from each and what I can improve upon in the future.

May 2020 – Solitary Bees (Garden Naturalist #1)

This was a film written and filmed in a single afternoon. The speed was necessary as a group of solitary mining bees were mining in a patch of overturned, freshly watered mud in the early afternoon sunlight. I knew by sundown they would have disappeared and there was no guarantee they would return the next day. The time limit therefore I had to write fast by also accurately, ensuring there was plenty of science in there that was accurate and interesting, without sounding like I was cramming everything in. Additionally I had to use my camera in new ways (considering I don't yet own a macro lens), using exceptionally shallow focal lengths amongst other skills to capture the lives of these fantastic animals. The editing process was a little more leisurely, taking up the weekends for the following three weeks, but with playing around with new sounds and effects, I wanted to make a professional looking, informative and interesting short film.

December 2019 – A Step into the Ocean (5 min.)

This project was another assessed project I wanted to expand and make something special. This time looking at the journey of the Cetaceans. I construct a brief, highly condensed story, from their terrestrial roots to their current ocean-going lifestyle.

Due to its assessed nature, this is short and highly detailed.

There is a longer, more in depth documentary being edited, investigating a much larger range of topics, including pressures and threats as well as current research into the potential future of the species.

I took note of the improvements I wanted to make from previous projects, including the assessed documentary from 2018, and tried to make it tighter, neater and better. I gained permission to film at the Natural History Museum in London, getting a chance to film in the Hintze Hall. Although highly

scientific I wanted the labels and diagrams to be smooth as well as easy to understand and read.

I am incredibly grateful for Fiona Taylor, for the music which she specifically wrote for natural history films. Her site is available here:

<https://fionajtaylor.com/>.

Additionally, I need to thank Ellen Coombes for museum access and an insightful interview which will be in the longer version of the documentary.

This project also deserves a special mention, considering during the process of writing and researching was the project which made me wholeheartedly fall in love with the industry and focused my choice on a future career. From this, I am now aiming to get into wildlife and science documentary film making.

I hope I succeeded in what I set out to do and that you enjoy watching.

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December 2018 – Fathers of Evolution

During this project, I developed my research skills and improved how I can write a story from the facts and history. I utilised anatomical specimens in order to put my points across as well as using labelling and signage throughout. In a perfect non-assessed world, this would have been a little longer, reducing the number of labels necessary, and exploring what each person did in a little more detail. This is focussed specifically on Lamarck, as I feel as though I did not explore the huge advancements he made in the subject of biology. Also, more people needed to be mentioned, this is a huge story which is far too often simplified, and to investigate the complexities would have been an interesting research route to take.

I discovered a lot more about presenting; how to better deliver lines, where the emphasis should be and how to phrase complex subject in an understandable manner. Additionally, I learned how to better engage the with the camera and the audience.

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July 2018 – 60 Seconds on Salmon

The creation of this short was incredibly eye opening. I learned how to write concisely and clearly (on a subject I had too much to say on) as well as learning how to present. Presenting requires a calm, casual demeanour as well as getting my personality and passion for the subject across, culminating in the ability to convey an engrossing wildlife story.

Having viewed this again a year later I have improved my technique of talking to camera, reducing hand motion being a big part of that. It should also be noted that the footage has been sped up by a factor 0.2, in order for it to fit into the 60 seconds as requested by BBC Earth.