A DOCUMENTARY BY
ACADEMY AWARD WINNER
MEGAN MYLAN

GUARDIANS OF THE BIRDS





Twelve-year-old **Marcelo** knows that to find a bird, you have to learn its song. In the dense green of rural Colombia—the most bird-diverse country on Earth—listening is everything. Long before a flash of color in the canopy, there is a whistle, a trill, a call carried through the trees.

Marcelo is a proud member of *Guardián de las Aves*, young birdwatchers, rescuers, and educators who see, and hear, the world differently. With binoculars and smartphones in hand, they document the birds around them, protect fragile habitats, and share what they discover with their community and beyond. Through their eyes, birds become both a source of wonder and an urgent warning system, revealing what is at stake in a rapidly changing world—and what is possible when care, knowledge, and hope take root early.



SYNOPSIS

"The only way is—you've got to know the song."

Twelve-year-old Marcelo says without looking up, listening into the mist as he and his nine-year-old companion wait along a narrow road for the bus that will take them to school. Morning is a wash of green—fields, trees, the blurred edge of wetland beyond. "You have to listen," he continues. "Otherwise it's just green, green, and more green… and then—" he snaps his fingers, "red!"

They wait. A call threads through the air. Marcelo tilts his head, smiles. The red he's talking about a scarlet tanager, passes so quickly it feels almost imagined. He whistles the bird's song, hoping to call it back. Wonder begins like this: as attention, as patience, as belief that something is there even when you can't yet see it.

Marcelo is a founding member—and one of the most persuasive recruiters—of *Guardián de las Aves* or Guardian of the Birds, a loose coalition of young birders across Colombia who map, document, and defend the species around them. On his phone, he scrolls through his life list: hundreds of names, each tied to a place, a sound, a moment. He wants to see every bird in Colombia, to study them, to understand what keeps them here—and what might drive them away.

The bus rumbles into view. As they climb aboard, the conversation shifts. They talk about a friend's father, once a logger, now building birdwatching towers overlooking the marsh. Places where birds—and people—can return. Marcelo has an idea for his next TikTok video, about one of his favorite birds, a warbler, a small yellow migrant that travels thousands of miles north, then comes back each year to this narrow stretch of land.

"I'll get a shot from up top," he says, already framing the shot, "and I know just the background music, people will feel it."

Outside the window, the landscape passes—wetlands, pasture, fragments of forest. Marcelo watches, listening. For him, birds are not just beauty. They are signals: of changing water, of shifting climate, of whether a place is still safe to return to. In a region still finding its footing after conflict, this kind of attention becomes its own form of resistance. As the bus disappears down the road, the morning fills again with birdsong.



PROJECT STATUS

The film is currently in development. Research trips and sustained relationship-building have led to strong community buy-in and initial casting.

We are now seeking development funding to produce a sample reel that will help articulate the film's narrative, characters, and visual approach.

DISTRIBUTION + IMPACT

We believe this is a film distributors and audiences are hungry for—a crowd-pleaser that doesn't sacrifice complexity. The children draw us into a story of wonder with real stakes. In a post-conflict landscape marked by extraordinary beauty, richness, and fragility, the film invites a deeper kind of attention. The children's curiosity, expertise, and commitment challenge their communities—and, by extension, the audience—to listen more closely, to recognize and value what others overlook, and to work together to protect the living wonders that sustain them.

The vibrant constellation of groups dedicated to birding, conservation, climate, land use, sustainability and community-led development offer powerful pathways to help carry the film both wide and deep in ways that will endure.

We bring the same creativity and intensity to distribution as to our filmmaking, amplifying reach and impact in partnership with major streamers, broadcasters, theatrical distributors, media coverage and organizations whose work resonates with the films' themes. We have a proven track record of **effecting change**: raising over 3 million dollars for charitable causes; attracting new influencers to issues; generating extensive nuanced media coverage, mobilizing thousands of volunteers and informing public policy.

Oscar-winner Megan Mylan creates documentary films with distinct intimacy including *Simple as Water*, *Lost Boys of Sudan* and *Smile Pinki*. Along with an Academy Award she has been recognized with an Independent Spirit Award, and a Guggenheim Fellowship, as well as Peabody, Producers Guild, and several Emmy nominations. Before working in documentary, Megan worked in the U.S. and Brazil with Ashoka, a nonprofit identifying and supporting global social entrepreneurs. She has a Bachelor's from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and Masters' degrees in Journalism and Latin American Studies from the University of California at Berkeley where she was also guest director of the Graduate Documentary program.

César Rojas Ángel is a Colombian documentary filmmaker, cinematographer and video editor. He received his master's degree at UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism. His work focuses on the environment, migration, Indigenous communities' rights, and the challenges for the peace process in Colombia, among other topics. His work has been published by the French public network France 24 and the Los Angeles Times. He is currently based in Bogotá, after working as a Video Fellow at the BBC News North America in Washington, D.C.

FILM TEAM

Principe Productions is a 501(c)3 non-profit film production company known for artfully crafted and award-winning documentaries that earn critical acclaim, reach broad global audiences, and drive meaningful impact.

Our films screen globally in theaters and with partners including HBO, PBS, ARTE, NHK, TVBrasil, National Geographic, Hulu, The NY Times, NDTV and Doordarshan.

Support for our work includes: the Ford Foundation, Flora Family Foundation, Good Gravy Films, InMaat Foundation, the WK Kellogg Foundation, Kendeda Fund, MetLife, National Endowment for the Humanities, NY State Council for the Arts, the Perspective Fund, PetroBras, the Sundance Institute, and the Gates Foundation.

