

DECODING THE DRIFTLESS





Documentary Film - *Decoding the Driftless* (2018)

Awards:

- Emmy Award - Best Documentary - Topical, Upper Midwest Emmy Awards - Minneapolis, MN (October 2021)
- Award of Prestige - Best Cinematography, Vegas Film Awards (monthly) - Las Vegas, NV (April 2020)
- Audience Award, Vegas Film Awards (monthly) - Las Vegas, NV (April 2020)
- Silver Remi Award, Documentary Feature, WorldFest-Houston International Film Festival - Houston, TX (April 2020)
- Titletown Jury Award, Green Bay Film Festival - Green Bay, WI, (March 2020)
- Audience Choice Award, Green Bay Film Festival - Green Bay, WI, (March 2020)
- Best Documentary, Beloit International Film Festival - Beloit, WI (February 2020)
- Best Documentary, Los Angeles Cinematography AWARDS - Los Angeles, CA (January 2020)
- Humanitarian Award of Distinction, IndieFEST Film Awards - La Jolla, CA (January 2020)
- Award of Excellence - Special Mention, Documentary Feature, IndieFEST Film Awards - La Jolla, CA (November 2019)
- Award of Excellence - Nature/Environment/Wildlife, IndieFEST Film Awards - La Jolla, CA (November 2019)
- Best Documentary Feature, Iowa Independent Film Festival - Mason City, IA (September 2019)
- Best Documentary Feature, FilmCon Awards (monthly) - Los Angeles, CA (September 2019)
- Best Cinematography, FilmCon Awards (monthly) - Los Angeles, CA (September 2019)
- Best Cinematography, New York Film Awards (monthly) - New York, NY (September 2019)
- 60 Best Films, Los Angeles Film Awards - Los Angeles, CA (September 2019)
- Best Documentary, Gold Movie Awards (monthly) - London, England (August 2019)
- Best Documentary Feature, Festigious International Film Festival (monthly) - Los Angeles, CA (August 2019)
- Best Picture, Los Angeles Independent Film Festival - Hollywood, CA (August 2019)
- Best Cinematography, Los Angeles Independent Film Festival - Hollywood, CA (August 2019)
- Copper Quill Award - Best Documentary Feature, Red Cedar Film Festival - Menomonie, WI (July 2019)
- Outstanding Excellence - Docs Without Borders Film Festival - Nassau, DE (March 2019)

Finalist:

- Florence Film Awards - Florence, Italy (November 2019)

Semi-Finalist:

- Vegas Film Awards (monthly) - Las Vegas, NV (April 2020)
- New York Film Awards (monthly) - New York, NY (September 2019)
- Los Angeles Film Awards - Los Angeles, CA (September 2019)
- Gold Movie Awards - London, England (August 2019)
- Los Angeles Independent Film Festival - Hollywood, CA (August 2019)
- jellyFEST Film Festival - American Film Institute, Los Angeles, CA (June 2019)

Official Selections:

- Mesa International Film Festival - Mesa, AZ (December 2021)
- Depth of Field International Film Festival - Lewes, DE (June 2020)
- WorldFest-Houston International Film Festival - Houston, TX (April 2020)
- Vegas Film Awards - Las Vegas, NV (April 2020)
- Fargo Film Festival - Fargo, ND (March 2020)
- Green Bay Film Festival - Green Bay, WI (March 2020)
- Accolade Global Film Competition - La Jolla, CA (March 202)
- Beloit International Film Festival - Beloit, WI (February 2020)

- Florence Film Awards - Florence, Italy (November 2019)
- Weyauwega International Film Festival - Weyauwega, WI (November 2019)
- Conserve Sauk Film Festival - Baraboo, WI (November 2019)
- Eau Claire World Film Festival - Eau Claire, WI (November 2019)
- IndieFEST Film Awards - La Jolla, CA (November 2019)
- Wildlife Conservation Film Festival - New York, NY (October 2019)
- Iowa Independent Film Festival - Mason City, IA (September 2019)
- FilmCon Awards (monthly) - Los Angeles, CA (September 2019)
- New York Film Awards (monthly) - New York, NY (September 2019)
- Gold Movie Awards (monthly) - London, England (August 2019)
- Los Angeles Independent Film Festival - Hollywood, CA (August 2019)
- Festigious International Film Festival (monthly) - Los Angeles, CA (August 2019)
- Red Cedar Film Festival - Menomonie, WI (July 2019)
- #Adventure MN Film Fest - Minneapolis, MN (May 2019)
- Julien Dubuque International Film Festival - Dubuque, IA (April 2019)
- Cape May Film Festival - Cape May, NJ (April 2019)
- Indie Film Wisconsin Film Festival - Watertown, WI (April 2019)
- Oneota Film Festival - Decorah, IA (March 2019)
- Frozen River Film Festival - Winona, MN (February 2019)
- Driftless Film Festival - Mineral Point, WI (November 2018)
- Flyway Film Festival - Pepin, WI (October 2018)

PBS:

- KEET - Eureka, CA (August 2021)
- WPBS - Watertown, NY (August 2021)
- KTWU - Topeka, KS (August 2021)
- KPTS - Wichita, KS (August 2021)
- WEAO - Akron, OH (August 2021)
- WNED-TV - Buffalo, NY (August 2021)
- Idaho PBS - Pocatello, ID (August 2021)
- WPSU Penn State - Happy Valley, PA (August 2021)
- Austin PBS - Austin, TX (July 2021)
- PBS Western Reserve - Cleveland, OH (July 2021)
- WGVU - Grand Rapids, MI (July 2021)
- WNMU - Marquette, MI (July 2021)
- PBS Wisconsin - Madison, WI (June 2021)
- WFSU - Tallahassee, FL (June 2021)
- Kentucky Educational Television - Lexington, KY (June 2021)
- WIFT - Harrisburg, PA (June 2021)
- TPT Twin Cities PBS - St. Paul, MN (May 2021)
- KAKM-TV Alaska Public Television - Anchorage, AK (March 2021)
- Nine PBS - St. Louis, MO (February 2021)
- OPB+ - Portland, OR (January 2021)
- WQPT Quad Cities PBS - Rock Island, IL (January 2021)

Additional Recognition:

- Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism - Wisconsin Dells, WI (March 2019)

Additional Screenings:

- WKBT TV - La Crosse, IW (August 2020)
- Numerous locales - MN, IA, WI, IL (October 2018 -)

LA CROSSE Tribune

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Jonas Stenstrom, director of "Decoding the Driftless," surveys the Mississippi Valley from a helicopter during filming of the documentary.

Local Emmy winners

La Crosse area producers earn award for 'Decoding the Driftless'

Lightning struck twice for a pair of Midwestern documentary filmmakers who earned their second Emmy Award Saturday night at the 22nd Upper Midwest Regional Emmy Awards Gala at the Radisson Blu Mall of America.

Tim Jacobson and George Howe from the La Crosse area earned the coveted television award as producers of the nature documentary, "Decoding the Driftless."

The award also names fellow producer and previous Emmy winner Rob Nelson along with first-time winner Jonas Stenstrom for his directorial role.

"Decoding the Driftless" had its commercial television premiere last year in La Crosse. Since then, PBS stations in no less than 28 states, including as far away as California, Texas, New York, Florida, and Alaska, have aired the film, and its broadcast reach



Lisa and Tim Jacobson and Chery and George Howe at the Emmys.

continues to grow.

The latest Emmy Award is part of a long line of accolades for "Decoding the Driftless" coming from international and national film competitions, including in London, UK; Florence, Italy; New York, NY; Las Vegas, NV; and Los Angeles, California.

The documentary has been honored as either "Best Picture" or "Best Documentary"

by Los Angeles Independent Film Festival Awards in Hollywood, Gold Movie Awards in London, UK, Festigious International Film Festival in Los Angeles, Filmmakers Connect Awards, Los Angeles Cinematography AWARDS, Beloit International Film Festival, Iowa Independent Film Festival, and Red Cedar Film Festival.

"Walking the red carpet in

both Hollywood and London for our film, and now receiving an Emmy Award, have been tremendous opportunities to draw positive attention to critically important landscape conservation issues," said film producer Howe. "This is what we only dreamed of accomplishing."

"It's not just the number of awards that's significant," said film producer, cinematographer and Sustainable Driftless, Inc. president Jacobson. "It's the varied types of awards, too. We've been recognized for top-notch content, an engaging story, the artistry of the cinematography, and for the positive humanitarian impact in promoting care for our precious earth."

"The first time I traveled from Sweden to visit the Driftless Area, I knew it was a special, magical place," said Untamed Science, Inc.'s Stenstrom, the film's director. "Capturing the scenic beauty and mysteries of the landscape on film has been a true joy."

In the feature-length documentary "Decoding the Driftless," viewers are taken on a wild

Please see EMMY, Page A5

Emmy

From A4

ride of adventure above, on, and below the Driftless Region through this film of exploration.

"From day one I predicted that this film would blow people's socks off,"

said Nelson, president of Untamed Science and another of the film's producers. "Based upon the enthusiastic reception from thousands of audience members, the huge TV broadcast distribution, numerous film festival awards, and now an Emmy Award, that has proven to

be true."

This Emmy Award comes seven years after Nelson, Howe, and Jacobson received an Emmy in 2014 for the similarly-themed documentary short, "Mysteries of the Driftless."

"Decoding the Driftless was produced through col-

laboration between two nonprofit organizations, Sustainable Driftless, Inc. and Untamed Science, Inc., with an outpouring of community support and a wide range of sponsoring organizations.

For more about the documentary visit SustainableDriftless.org.

Sustainable Driftless Inc. announces new film project at Viterbo event

At the “Celebrating the Driftless” event at Viterbo University on Wednesday evening, Tim Jacobson, president of Sustainable Driftless Inc., announced that the organization is launching a new documentary film project.

The working title is Driftless Explorations, and it will be a follow-up to the locally-produced and regional Emmy Award-winning film Decoding the Driftless.

A teaser trailer for the upcoming film was shown along with several completed short films: The Places in Decoding the Driftless, Tundra Swans, and music video A Place to Be (featuring local musician Ryan Howe).

Jacobson said the nonprofit organization already has received pledges totaling more than \$30,000 even before the film project was publicly announced. The initial timeline for completing Driftless Explorations is the

end of 2023, and the organization hopes to secure television broadcast as it has for Decoding the Driftless.

Sustainable Driftless is seeking financial support for the film project from local businesses, communities, and individuals. Donations for the film can be mailed to Sustainable Driftless Inc., P.O. Box 1231, La Crosse, WI 54602.

The “Celebrating the Driftless” event, sponsored by the D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership as part of its lecture series, was held in the Viterbo University Fine Arts Center and included a screening of Decoding the Driftless and live music by Howe.

For more information about Sustainable Driftless, Inc. and its existing film, Decoding the Driftless, visit SustainableDriftless.org



Board members of Sustainable Driftless, Inc. assembled around a collection of film awards for Decoding the Driftless, are from left Rev. Kent Johnson, Nancy Breed (Secretary), George Howe (Vice President), former State Sen. Brian Rude, Julia Henley (Treasurer), Tim Jacobson (President), Brian Murphy, and Thomas Johnson, Ph.D.

LOCAL & STATE

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2018 |  MADISON.COM | SECTION C

ON WISCONSIN | KICKAPOO RIVER

A film to 'blow people's socks off'



SUBMITTED PHOTO

"Decoding the Driftless" director Jonas Stenstrom looks over scenic Devil's Lake.

La Crosse hosting world premiere for 'Driftless' follow-up

RANDY ERICKSON
La Crosse Tribune

LA CROSSE — Getting together the principal parties for the world premiere screening of "Decoding the Driftless" was no mean feat, fittingly symbolic of the work that went into making the hourlong documentary.

For the follow-up to the "Mysterries of the Driftless" documentary, Emmy Award-winning filmmakers George Howe and Tim Jacobson of Sustainable Driftless teamed up again

with national TV series host Rob Nelson of "Untamed Science." And for this project they added Swedish filmmaker Jonas Stenstrom of "Untamed Science" as director, six-time Emmy-winning wildlife cinematographer Neil Rettig and YouTube sensation Mike, known for his PleaseStandBy channel.

It wasn't hard nailing down locals Jacobson and Howe for Wednesday's premiere at the 1,100-seat theater at Viterbo University's Fine Arts Center, but the other people behind the film are making a big effort to celebrate this cinematic accomplishment. Stenstrom is flying

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“Working to create this film has been a labor of love for me. It’s a way I can give back to this amazing region that has fascinated and inspired me for decades. I feel very blessed to have grown up in the Driftless Region, study and enjoy it for decades, and work to conserve and restore rare resources here. I have always had a passion for sharing with others what I’ve learned and felt, so creating and sharing a film like this is a dream come true.”

George Howe, a producer and writer for ‘Decoding the Driftless’

Driftless

From C1

from Sweden, Nelson is coming in from North Carolina, and Rettig, who is based in Prairie du Chien, will be jetting back from Spain, where he was screening another of his films.

The five filmmakers will be at Viterbo to introduce “Decoding the Driftless,” and they’ll take questions after the screening.

Nelson is confident viewers will be awestruck by the Driftless Region. He has lived in amazingly scenic places — including Hawaii, Miami, Australia, Montana and Colorado — and believes once people see “Decoding the Driftless” they’ll put this area among them.

“This film really will blow people’s socks off,” Nelson said. “The great thing about the Driftless is that it catches you by surprise. People don’t usually think to travel to northeastern Iowa for amazing scenery. They don’t realize the area contains beautiful waterfalls and dramatic cliffs rising above twisting rivers. When you get there you think, ‘Boy, I just found a hidden treasure.’”

The Upper Mississippi’s Driftless Region, of course, is more than just scenery, Jacobson emphasized. He noted the Driftless boasts the world’s only concentration of ancient effigy burial mounds, a migratory bird flyway, the nation’s largest organic farming cooperative, the world’s highest concentration of coldwater streams (making it a trout-fishing paradise), and Lake Pepin, the Mississippi’s widest point and birthplace of water skiing.

Jacobson was a producer, cameraman and writer on the film, and Howe was a producer and writer. Together, they formed Sustainable Driftless to get the film made. They both put their professional lives on hold over the past several years to get “Decoding the Driftless” made.

“Working to create this film has been a labor of love for me,” Howe said. “It’s a way I can give back to this amazing region that has fas-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

George Howe, Tim Jacobson and Rob Nelson prepare to shoot a scene at Maiden Rock Bluff for “Decoding the Driftless.” The hourlong documentary has its world premiere Wednesday at Viterbo University.

If you go

What: World premiere screening of “Decoding the Driftless,” followed by Q&A with filmmakers

When: 7 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 26, with live pre-screening music by Ryan Howe starting at 6:45 p.m. and post-screening reception from 8:30 to 9:30

Where: Viterbo University Fine Arts Center main theater, 929 Jackson St., La Crosse

Cost: Free and open to all

Host: D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership

Details: sustainabledriftless.org

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Jonas Stenstrom, director of “Decoding the Driftless,” surveys the Mississippi Valley from a helicopter during filming of the documentary.

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what I’ve learned and felt, so creating and sharing a film like this is a dream come true.”

“Now that we have our finished film in hand, it’s apparent that all the sacrifices and hard work were very much worth it,” Jacobson added. “I couldn’t be happier with the results.”

The point of making “Decoding the Driftless” was not to just to serve up scenes of Driftless like so much eye candy. Jacobson and Howe are hoping for a bigger impact.

“The goal of both the Sustainable Driftless organization and the film is to inspire resource conservation, vibrant local communities and sustainable growth in the region,” Jacobson explained. “We want the film to serve as a tireless cheerleader for this amazing land, both locally and abroad. We see the Driftless Region as a remarkable international geo-tourism destination with huge untapped potential.”

galena gazette 10/24/18

Arts & Life

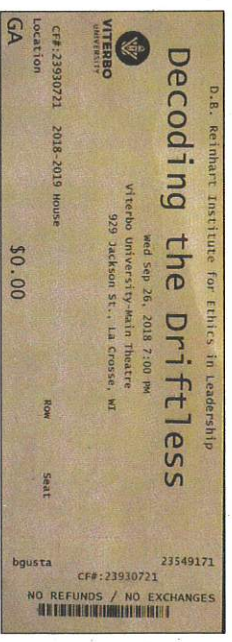
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'This film will leave you breathless.'

Nancy Breed, executive director
of the Galena-Jo Daviess County Historical Society



New film strives to

Decoding the Driftless

Go on a wild ride of adventure above, on, and below the amazing Driftless Region through a new film of exploration. Soar over ancient, rugged bluffs, skim the surface of primordial rivers, venture deep underground to secret worlds, marvel at sacred archeological treasures, hang perilously over massive rock cliffs and travel across time itself to explore and decipher ancient clues of the unglaciated Driftless Region landscape, with its captivating scenic beauty.

The Illinois premiere of "Decoding the Driftless" will take place Saturday, Nov. 17, during two showings, one at 2 p.m. and another at 6 p.m., both at the Galena Territory Owners' Club, 2000 Territory Dr. The screenings are free but advance reservations are required.

Emmy Award-winning filmmakers George Howe and Tim Jacobson of Sustainable Driftless teamed up again with national television series host Rob Nelson of Unnamed Science to produce a feature-length film about the amazing origins and diverse natural and archaeological resources of the Driftless Region. The team delivers extremely rare footage of natural phenomena and scenic beauty in the Driftless in a way never seen before.

The D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership hosted the world premiere of the one-hour documentary in the 1,100-seat main theater in the Fine Arts Center at Viterbo University in La Crosse, Wis., on Sept. 26. The free event, open to the public, filled the theater plus turned away about 400 people.

Representing the northwest Illinois area of the Driftless region at the world premiere were Nancy Breed, board member of Sustainable Driftless, Inc., and Nancy Hyman, both of Galena.

"It was a thrill to see the audience so enthusiastic about the new video," said Breed. "As a native and life-long resident of Jo Daviess County, the southern tip of the Driftless, I feel blessed to live in such a unique environment. Sharing the beauty and history of the region through efforts like Decoding the Driftless gives me great joy."

Breed worked with the producers in autumn 2017 to coordinate footage of the Galena, Dubuque and Platteville areas.

"Unfortunately, much of the lead mining story—so critical to the human development of the southern third of the Driftless—ended up on the cutting room floor," she said. "But it may eventually end up in an outtake Director's Cut version or some other form."

However, the tri-state area is included in the film's Native American story, with the thunderbird effigy mound at Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation's Casper Bluff preserve taking center stage. JDF's executive director Steve Bang explained the connection of the area's first people with the land and this region.

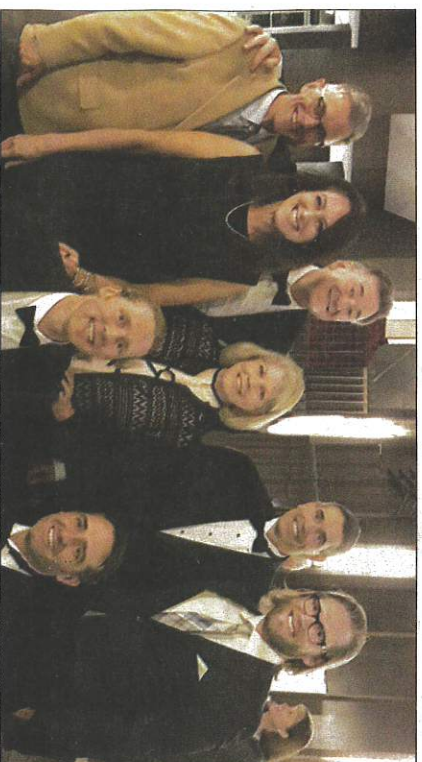
In addition to Bang, the film includes a diverse cast of scientists, conservationists and guides.

"I believe the real and personal stories, fascinating natural phenomena, and surprising natural history presented in this film, are going to profoundly touch the lives of many, many people, and inspire them to connect with nature," said George Howe, co-founder of Sustainable Driftless. "When people connect with and enjoy nature, many good things happen. We are truly part of the natural world, and it's important for people to know about the land where they live, and develop a good sense of place."

Tim Jacobson, president of Sustainable Driftless, Inc., and one of the producers, cameramen and writers for the film, said, "The Driftless Area of the



Nancy Hyman and Nancy Breed of Galena join on-screen talent Jonas Stenstrom and Rob Nelson from Unnamed Science. *Contributed photos*



Members of the Sustainable Driftless Board and Unnamed Science, standing from left: board members Brian Murphy, Julia Henley, George Howe, Nancy Breed, Tim Jacobson and Thomas Johnson. Kneeling: Jonas Stenstrom and Rob Nelson from Unnamed Science. *Contributed photos*

Upper Mississippi is most amazing to me, not solely for its attribute as the only 'island' driftless region in the world, but because of the sheer number of truly remarkable characteristics in its geological and archaeological history as well as its modern biological and cultural significance. It's the center of the only place on Earth with a concentration of ancient effigy burial mounds. It's one of the largest migratory flyways for birds in the world. With Lake Pepin, it contains the widest naturally occurring part of the Mississippi River, which became the birthplace of waterskiing.

"It's the birthplace of the modern soil and water conservation movement, too. It has the nation's largest organic farming cooperative. The region contains the Earth's highest concentration of coldwater streams, which makes it a world-class trout-fishing destination. And as a landscape photographer, I know that it's breathtakingly beautiful."

The documentary film was a huge undertaking that required the founding of a new non-profit

organization, Sustainable Driftless, Inc., with board members drawn from all four states of the Driftless Region. The group had to ramp up its efforts quickly to raise six figures of funding to cover the production budget.

The director, Jonas Stenstrom, was flown in repeatedly from Sweden, and one of the producers, Rob Nelson, made multiple trips from his home in North Carolina.

Local cameramen captured video footage while tromping through and flying over the rugged landscape throughout the seasons.

The crew endured various mishaps and setbacks, including one of the editing computers crashing, also having to switch editing software mid-project, and contending with unpredictable weather during narrow windows of filming time. Producers Jacobson and Howe put much of their professional lives on hold to focus major parts of their time on the project over several years.

"The goal of both the Sustainable Driftless orga-

Illinois premiere of 'Decoding the Driftless'

GALENA—The Galena-Jo Daviess County Historical Society will host the Illinois premiere of "Decoding the Driftless" on Saturday, Nov. 17, at the Galena Territory Association's Owners' Club, 2000 Territory Dr., Galena.

With a capacity audience anticipated, two free showings will be held: the first at 2 p.m. and the second at 6 p.m.

Each event will begin with a one-hour reception including popcorn and a cash bar, showing of the film, followed by co-producer and writer George Howe discussing the making of the movie and answering questions from the audience. Videos and wearables will be available for purchase.

Advance reservations are required; no walk-ins will be allowed. To reserve a seat, provide your name, which show and number of seats desired to the society at 815-777-9129 or info@galena-historymuseum.org.

The historical society's hosting of the film aligns with its mission of sharing stories unique to Galena and the Driftless to light and to life, passionately preserved, actively promoted, rationally acclaimed.



nization and the film is to inspire resource conservation, vibrant local communities, and sustainable growth in the region," Jacobson explained. "We want the film to serve as a tireless cheerleader for this amazing land, both locally and abroad. We see the Driftless Region as a remarkable international geotourism destination with huge untapped potential."

Jordan Klorne, who serves as one of the guides in the film and who also did camera work, said, "Even after a lifetime of living in the Driftless Area I am still discovering beautiful and amazing scenic wonders around every corner."

"This film will leave you breathless," Nancy Breed added.



‘Decoding the Driftless’ awarded ‘Best Picture,’ ‘Best Cinematography’ by LA Independent Film Festival Awards

Decorah artist-filmmaker Jordan Kjome, Luther professor Thomas Johnson talk about their work with the film and its producers

Wednesday, March 20, 2019 10:46 AM

The Midwest-produced feature-length documentary film, *Decoding the Driftless*, has been named “Best Picture” and “Best Cinematography” in the Documentary Feature category by the Los Angeles Independent Film Festival Awards (LAIFFA).

Emmy Award-winning filmmakers George Howe and Tim Jacobson of *Sustainable Driftless* teamed up again with national TV series host Rob Nelson of *Untamed Science* to produce a feature-length film about the amazing origins and diverse natural and archaeological resources of the ruggedly beautiful Driftless Region.



Jordan Kjome in outflow from underground river with wetsuit (Submitted photo)

This time, the creative team added Swedish filmmaker Jonas Stenstrom of *Untamed Science* as director, six-time Emmy-winning wildlife cinematographer Neil Rettig and YouTube sensation Mike a/k/a “PleaseStandBy” (formerly “ChimneySwift11”) with his 1.8 million subscribers. The team delivers extremely rare footage of natural phenomena and scenic beauty in the Driftless in a way never seen before.

Decorah-based filmmaker Jordan Kjome helped with creating cinematography during the film’s production in Northeast Iowa.

“The opportunity to work with and sometimes lead Jonas Stenstrom and Rob Nelson from Untamed Science has been the highlight of my career as an artist filmmaker,” Kjome said. “Piloting drones along the 300-foot-tall Bluffton Bluffs, time-lapsing sunrises over the Mississippi River and going deep into the Earth to document some of the area’s most spectacular cave formations has led me to some of my favorite places in the Driftless Region.”

Other local filmed locations included Dunning’s Spring, Malanaphy Spring, Ice Cave, Coldwater Cave, the Upper Iowa River and Effigy Mounds National Monument.

About the film

With “Decoding the Driftless,” viewers are taken on a wild ride of adventure above, on and below the amazing Driftless Region through this film of exploration.

Soar over ancient, rugged bluffs, skim the surface of primordial rivers, venture deep underground to secret worlds, marvel at sacred archeological treasures, hang perilously over massive rock cliffs and travel across time itself to explore and decipher ancient clues of the unglaciated Driftless Region landscape, with its captivating scenic beauty.

“The goal of both the Sustainable Driftless organization and the film is to inspire resource conservation, vibrant local communities, and sustainable growth in the region,” co-producer Tim Jacobson explained. “We see the Driftless Region as a remarkable international geo-tourism destination with huge untapped potential. We want the film to serve as a tireless cheerleader for this amazing land, both locally and abroad. Winning the ‘Best Picture’ and ‘Best Cinematography’ awards in Hollywood helps us tremendously in elevating the significance and recognition of our beautiful and precious landscape.”

Thomas Johnson, an associate professor of communication studies at Luther College, has been on the Board of Sustainable Driftless, Inc. for two years.

“I have been able to see [“Decoding the Driftless”] develop, as well as offer feedback during post-production as the film progressed from rough cut to fine cut to final cut,” Johnson said. “The natural resources before us here in the Driftless are very distinct and my hope is the film serves as a call to action to value, preserve and celebrate accordingly. And, frankly, so many of those resources featured in the film are right at our doorsteps here in Northeast Iowa so I hope it really resonates for folks in the area.”

Already, the film has been shown as an official selection at the Flyway Film Festival, Driftless Film Festival, Frozen River Film Festival and Oneota Film Festival. At the Frozen River Film Festival in February, the documentary was a close runner-up for the People’s Choice Award. Recently, the film has been chosen as an official selection at the Cape May Film Festival, Docs Without Borders Film Festival and the Julien Dubuque International Film Festival, in addition to LAIFFA. Tens of thousands of people have viewed the film at festivals, theaters, community screenings and educational events, and thousands of DVDs have been distributed.

“As a Board, we recognize it has been a relatively short time period since its release in late September 2018 so at this point we’re thrilled with how many folks have been able to see the film,” Johnson said. “Additionally, we’re honored by how many festivals have chosen the film as an Official Selection. Hopefully, these awards from LAIFFA serve as a springboard.”

Kjome said “the Sustainable Driftless team is busy setting up additional screenings (including

Decorah), applying to film festivals and editing the documentary to a suitable length for television (IPTV).”

DVD and Blu-ray copies of the film can be purchased through SustainableDriftless.org/store, and also will be on sale locally at the Decorah Hatchery in downtown Decorah.

Links to more information about the documentary include SustainableDriftless.org; facebook.com/SustainableDriftless; twitter.com/SustainDriftless.

About Sustainable Driftless, Inc.

Sustainable Driftless, Inc. is a nonprofit organization dedicated to inspiring resource conservation, vibrant communities and sustainable growth in the Driftless Region.

The group believes the region is an epic natural, cultural and historic treasure. While it is well known among some circles, it is widely unknown to most people outside the area despite having resources that could stand up to well-known assets such as Yellowstone National Park and the Smokey Mountains.

By promoting its value to the local public, Sustainable Driftless believes it can help strengthen conservation efforts and serve as a catalyst to better ensure that local communities are vibrant and sustainable. And by promoting the Driftless Region’s value to the larger (global) public as a premier international geo-tourism destination, we can help ensure the landscape’s conservation by demonstrating its value as an economic engine for its rural communities and its thoughtful, sustainable use.

<https://decorahnewspapers.com/Content/News/Local-News/Article/-Decoding-the-Driftless-awarded-Best-Picture-Best-Cinematography-by-LA-Independent-Film-Festival-Awards/2/10/47338>

LA CROSSE Tribune

'Decoding the Driftless' celebrates region with free premiere screening at Viterbo

Randy Erickson | La Crosse Tribune | Sept. 23, 2018



"Decoding the Driftless" director Jonas Stenstrom looks over scenic Devil's Lake.

Contributed photo

Getting together the principal parties for the world premiere screening of "Decoding the Driftless" was no mean feat, fittingly symbolic of the work that went into making the hour-long documentary.

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It wasn't hard nailing down locals Jacobson and Howe for Wednesday's premiere at the 1,100-seat theater at Viterbo University's Fine Arts Center, but the other people behind the film are making a big effort to celebrate this cinematic accomplishment. Stenstrom is flying from Sweden, Nelson is coming in from North Carolina, and Rettig, who is based in Prairie du Chien, will be jetting back from Spain, where he was screening another of his films.

The five filmmakers will be at Viterbo to introduce "Decoding the Driftless," and they'll take questions after the screening.

Nelson is confident viewers will be awestruck by the Driftless Region. He has lived in amazingly scenic places — including Hawaii, Miami, Australia, Montana and Colorado — and believes once people see "Decoding the Driftless" they'll rank this area among them.



George Howe, Tim Jacobson and Rob Nelson prepare to shoot a scene at Maiden Rock Bluff for "Decoding the Driftless." The hour-long documentary has its world premiere Wednesday at Viterbo University.

Contributed photo

"This film really will blow people's socks off," Nelson said. "The great thing about the Driftless is that it catches you by surprise. People don't usually think to travel to northeastern Iowa for amazing scenery. They don't realize the area contains beautiful waterfalls and dramatic cliffs rising above twisting rivers. When you get there you think, 'Boy, I just found a hidden treasure.'"

The Upper Mississippi's Driftless Region, of course, is more than just scenery, Jacobson emphasized. He noted the Driftless boasts the world's only concentration of ancient effigy

burial mounds, a migratory bird flyway, the nation's largest organic farming cooperative, the world's highest concentration of coldwater streams (making it a trout-fishing paradise), and Lake Pepin, the Mississippi's widest point and birthplace of water skiing.



Drone photography played a big role in filming "Decoding the Driftless."

Contributed photo

Jacobson was a producer, cameraman and writer on the film, and Howe was a producer and writer. Together, they formed Sustainable Driftless to get the film made. They both put their professional lives on hold over the past several years to get "Decoding the Driftless" made.

"Working to create this film has been a labor of love for me," Howe said. "It's a way I can give back to this amazing region that has fascinated and inspired me for decades. I feel very blessed to have grown up in the Driftless Region, study and enjoy it for decades, and work to conserve and restore rare resources here. I have always had a passion for sharing with others what I've learned and felt, so creating and sharing a film like this is a dream come true."



Jonas Stenstrom, director of "Decoding the Driftless," surveys the Mississippi Valley from a helicopter during filming of the documentary.

Contributed photo

“Now that we have our finished film in hand, it’s apparent that all the sacrifices and hard work were very much worth it,” Jacobson added. “I couldn’t be happier with the results.”



"Decoding the Driftless" documents the region from high above its scenic bluffs to seldom seen scenes below ground. Here, Jeff Thurlow and Jonas Stenstrom are pictured in a cave formation featuring an underground river.

Contributed photo

The point of making “Decoding the Driftless” was not to just to serve up scenes of Driftless like so much eye candy. Jacobson and Howe are hoping for a much bigger impact.

“The goal of both the Sustainable Driftless organization and the film is to inspire resource conservation, vibrant local communities, and sustainable growth in the region,” Jacobson explained. “We want the film to serve as a tireless cheerleader for this amazing land, both locally and abroad. We see the Driftless Region as a remarkable international geo-tourism destination with huge untapped potential.”



Randy Erickson

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https://lacrossetribune.com/entertainment/decoding-the-driftless-celebrates-region-with-free-premiere-screening-at/article_ef63ce45-02bb-51f7-8d39-f38308b79625.html

HOMETOWN



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

"Decoding the Driftless" director Jonas Stenstrom looks over scenic Devil's Lake.

'Decoding the Driftless'

Documentary wins pair of prizes at LA film festival

JENNIFER LU
La Crosse Tribune

"Decoding the Driftless," a 2018 documentary exploring the unique geology, ecology, archaeology and local communities of the Driftless Region, took home two awards from the monthly Los Angeles Independent Film Festival, including Best Picture in February.

"It's very exciting, very thrilling to get that kind of recognition," said Tim Jacobson, one of the producers. "More importantly, these awards help us advance the mission of sustaining the Driftless. People don't necessarily realize that this uniquely beautiful region exists, so we want to communicate it to the rest of the world."

The documentary is a follow-up to the shorter documentary, "Mysteries of the Driftless," which won a regional Emmy in 2014. Three of the four producers who worked on "Mysteries" also produced "Decoding the Driftless," including Jacobson, who is president of the board of directors at Sustainable Driftless Inc., a La Crosse-based nonprofit organization created to raise money for the film. Its mission is to promote resource conservation, lo-



Jonas Stenstrom, director of "Decoding the Driftless," surveys the Mississippi Valley from a helicopter during filming of the documentary.

cal communities and sustainable growth in the Driftless Region.

Jacobson called the documentary the centerpiece in the nonprofit's toolbox to promote geotourism in the Driftless Region.

The hourlong film devotes more time to the Mississippi River and conservation success stories, including that of the peregrine falcon, whose populations

were decimated by the mid-20th century because of the pesticide DDT. Populations have since recovered after the federal government restricted DDT use in 1972 and raptor breeding programs were put in place.

"People need to realize and recognize that they can make a difference and can accomplish things that do good for our natural environment," Jacobson said.

And, filmmakers were able to take production values to a whole new level, said Jacobson, who is also a pilot. "The cinematography is mindblowing. We did a lot of drone filming, we used airplanes, helicopters. There's just a lot of aerial imagery, which really showcases the beauty of the region."

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Documentary

From A6

The Driftless Region spans southwestern Wisconsin, southeastern Minnesota, northeastern Iowa and a tiny slice of northwestern Illinois.

The region gets its name from the lack of glacial drift, or deposits left behind by glaciers as they retreated during several thousand years. As such, the topography is not defined by lakes, but by steep ridges and valleys carved from fast-moving streams and rivers millions of years ago.

Because the region escaped glaciation, the ecosystems in the Driftless are unique as well. Rare microclimates support federally threatened or endangered species, including the Northern Monkshood and the Iowa Pleistocene Snail.

Meanwhile, the area's cold water streams offer prime habitat for trout. The upper Mississippi River, which cuts through the Driftless, is also a rest stop for 19 species of migrating waterfowl in the fall and Upper Mississippi Valley National Wildlife Refuge provides habitat

for 305 species of birds.

It's also a great place for outdoor sports and recreation, Jacobson said.

Just as people immediately associate Napa Valley with vineyards and lush landscapes, Jacobson said, "we want to have that same sort of recognition level for the Driftless Region, not just for people in La Crosse or Viroqua, but for people in New York, Los Angeles, Tokyo, Paris."

The documentary has been shown at Flyway Film Festival, Driftless film Festival, Frozen River Film Festival and Oneota Film Festival.

While the team is busy setting up additional screenings, applying to film festivals and editing the documentary to a suitable length for television, Jacobson said they're starting to think about their next documentary.

Jacobson refused to give away any details, but said it would be a significant departure from the previous films.

Jennifer Lu is the La Crosse Tribune environmental reporter. You can reach her by phone at 608-791-8217 and by email jennifer.lu@lee.net.

“Decoding the Driftless” wins top awards in Hollywood

Posted: Aug 26, 2019 02:21 PM CDT



George Howe & Tim Jacobson w LAIFFA trophies

Decoding the Driftless received "Best Picture" and "Best Cinematography" in the Documentary Feature category Saturday at the Los Angeles Independent Film Festival Awards (LAIFFA).

HOLLYWOOD, Calif. (WKBT) - *Decoding the Driftless* received "Best Picture" and "Best Cinematography" in the Documentary Feature category Saturday at the Los Angeles Independent Film Festival Awards (LAIFFA).

To produce the film, Emmy Award-winning filmmakers George Howe and Tim Jacobson of Sustainable Driftless, Inc. teamed up for a second time with national TV series host Rob Nelson of Untamed Science to make a feature-length film about the amazing origins and diverse natural and archaeological resources of the ruggedly beautiful Driftless Region of southwest Wisconsin, southeast Minnesota, northeast Iowa, and northwest Illinois. The creative

team added Swedish filmmaker Jonas Stenstrom of Untamed Science as director, six-time Emmy-winning wildlife cinematographer Neil Rettig, YouTube sensation Mike a/k/a "PleaseStandBy" (formerly "ChimneySwift11") with his 1.8 million subscribers, Jordan Kjome of Decorah, Iowa, Rodney Johnson from the Twin Cities, and Jack Knowles of Blue River, Wis. The team delivers extremely rare footage of natural phenomena and scenic beauty in the Driftless in a way never seen before.

"The goal of both the Sustainable Driftless organization and the film is to inspire resource conservation, vibrant local communities, and sustainable growth in the region," co-producer Tim Jacobson explained. "We see the Driftless Region as a remarkable international geo-tourism destination with huge untapped potential. We want the film to serve as a tireless cheerleader for this amazing land, both locally and abroad. Winning the 'Best Picture' and 'Best Cinematography' awards in Hollywood helps us tremendously in elevating the significance and recognition of our beautiful and precious landscape."

Decoding the Driftless has won awards and accolades around the country, including being named to the final list of semi-finalists - jellyFEST Film Festival (Los Angeles), award nominee finalist - Iowa Independent Film Festival (winners will be announced September 7th), Copper Quill Award - Best Documentary Feature - Red Cedar Film Festival, Best Picture and Best Cinematography - Los Angeles Independent Film Festival Awards, and Outstanding Excellence - Docs Without Borders Film Festival. At the Frozen River Film Festival in February, the documentary was a close runner-up for the People's Choice Award. Tens of thousands of people have viewed the film at festivals, theaters, community screenings, and educational events, and thousands of DVDs have been distributed.

Below are some links to more information about the documentary:

Website and trailer:	SustainableDriftless.org
Facebook page:	facebook.com/SustainableDriftless
Twitter page:	twitter.com/SustainDriftles

Filmmakers hope viewers catch the drift(less)

By John Molseed jmolseed@postbulletin.com
May 6, 2019



George Howe, a producer of the film "Decoding the Driftless," talks to a crowd at the Chatfield Center for the Arts on Sunday before a screening of the award-winning documentary.

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John.Molseed@postbulletin.com

CHATFIELD

People who don't know what the driftless region is, do know this area of Minnesota, a swath of Wisconsin, Iowa and a corner of Illinois are different from the rest of the Midwest.

A group of filmmakers and nature videographers came together to help people put a finger on and a name to the unique region.

More than 220 people attended a screening Sunday of "Decoding the Driftless" at the Chatfield Center for the Arts. The more than hourlong documentary delves into the one-of-a-kind geological area teeming with unique wildlife.

The film featured natural ice caves that create below-freezing breezes in the middle of July, wildlife that hasn't changed evolutionarily since the time of dinosaurs and towering bluff tops that hold fossils of tropical sea life.

The region gets its name from having avoided glaciation and the drift — debris and matter captured in glaciers and left behind when they melt. Ice Age glaciers literally plowed and receded across much of the rest of North America over tens of thousands of years. The driftless region was left untouched, leaving behind dramatic bluffs and ancient landscapes.

The film explores underground rivers, wildlife adapted to microclimates found in the region and the Mississippi River that helped carve out the bluffs made from ancient seabed sediment.

Producer George Howe presented the film and led a question and answer session after the screening. Aside from touring national film festivals, "Decoding the Driftless" hasn't had many major screenings since its debut last year in La Crosse to more than 1,700 viewers.

That's not to say it hasn't met with success. The film has won multiple film festival awards, including for "best picture" and "best cinematography" in the documentary feature category at the Los Angeles Independent Film Festival Award.

Most screenings are small and are booked at request, Howe said.

"We're just coming off the festival circuit," Howe said. "These shows I'm doing are because people came to us."

A four-year project, Howe and other producers Tim Jacobsen and Rob Nelson collaborated with Untamed Science under the direction and narration of Jonas Stenstrom.

Howe and the other producers are working to get the documentary broadcast on public television in each of the four states and then give viewers opportunities to screen it.

"The goal is to have millions of people see it," Howe said.

Many of the people attending the screening said they appreciated seeing their home region on screen in a polished production. Even people who appreciate the region said the documentary was informative.

"So much stuff is in your backyard, and you haven't even explored it yet," said Ted Stier, of Eyota. Stier goes trout fishing in the region but said there were areas highlighted in the film he had never been to or heard of before. He and Heather Swan brought their daughter Evie Stier, 6, to the screening. The family goes fishing, camps and kayaks in the region.

Evie said she probably would keep enjoying the region as she gets older.

"I feel like it's just a family tradition," she said. "I really do like to do it."

Howe said the film has a broad audience but added he hopes people who are leaders in the area or growing up in the region understand what a unique natural area they live in and protect it.

“I have faith that the local people, if they know what they have here and that it’s rare and special, they will help conserve and protect it,” Howe said.

Howe said some businesses have started using the film as a recruiting tool for their workforce. Talented people look for recreational opportunities when weighing options where to locate. People who come here for the natural recreation are also more likely to help take care of it, Howe said.

“It will inspire good, clean economic development,” he said.

For some viewers, the screening was an introduction to the driftless region as a concept even if they’ve lived here for years.

“It’s amazing how many people who live here and make a home here, they don’t even know the name of the area and how unique it is,” said Jenni Petersen-Brant, Chatfield Center for the Arts marketing director.

Petersen-Brant said she moved to Decorah from Nebraska after camping for three days in the region with her husband and has been aware that the driftless region is unique.

Lynn Harstad, a Chatfield Art Center board member, said she grew up in Wisconsin but never heard the term “driftless” until her church screened a 20-minute documentary that was a precursor to “Decoding the Driftless.” When she learned of the full-length film, she reached out to project leaders to bring it to Chatfield.

The turnout on a Sunday afternoon encouraged board members to plan another screening. A date for that has not yet been scheduled.

www.postbulletin.com/news/local/filmmakers-hope-viewers-catch-the-drift-less/article_1fcb7020-6f89-11e9-a6c0-d757c4f3f1c7.html

Roads Traveled Shining a spotlight on Wisconsin's Driftless Area

Julie Vander Velden | Mar 28, 2019



Swedish film director Jonas Stenstrom perches atop a rocky outcrop at Devil's Lake.

'DECODING THE DRIFTLESS' PHOTO

Boosting the profile of outdoor recreation is a priority for Sara Meaney, Wisconsin's new secretary-designee for tourism.

The timing is good because of new and major awards that shine a global spotlight onto the state's Driftless Area, whose dynamic hills, valleys and rock formations exist because the area is unglaciated.

The area is a nature lover's delight, and we've historically been pretty modest about it.

"Decoding the Driftless," about the area's geological diversity and beauty, won Best Picture and Best Cinematography in the documentary feature category during the recent Los Angeles International Film Festival.

Jonas Stenstrom of Sweden, “Driftless” director, is co-founder of Untamed Science, whose aim is to make science videos that are both educational and fun.
untamedscience.com

Devil’s Lake near Wisconsin Dells, Popp’s Cave near Richland Center and Maiden Rock at the Mississippi River are among the areas that get attention in the documentary.

The awards mean the film and this part of western Wisconsin “will become known throughout the world,” asserts Meaney, who presented a two-minute trailer of “Driftless” during the annual state tourism conference.

Gov. Tony Evers wants a new Office of Outdoor Recreation in the state tourism department, working in collaboration with the Department of Natural Resources.

Your column feedback and ideas are welcome. Write to Midwest Features, PO Box 259623, Madison, WI 53725 or mary@roadstraveled.com.