Conservation Symposium Series

This series, presented by the Biology Department, consists of various documentaries which focus on different aspects of wildlife conservation. Harvesting wildlife for illegal trade in wildlife parts, the exotic pet trade, placing wild animals in captivity and using them in the entertainment industry are just a few of the topics that will be covered in this series. There will be a discussion period following the documentary of that day where viewers will be encouraged to discuss their opinions on the featured topic. Aside from documentaries, there will also be guest speakers invited to share their knowledge and experience in wildlife conservation.

Viewer discretion is advised. Some material may be upsetting to some viewers.

FLEX Credit is pending.

February 28, 2:00 – 4:00 pm
BYKN 105
Blackfish

The documentary focuses on the captivity of Tilikum, a killer whale currently housed at Sea World who was involved in the deaths of three individuals. Blackfish expands on the discussion of keeping such intelligent creatures in captivity and using them as a source of entertainment. Director Gabriela Cowperthwaite argues that the capture of young Tilikum from the wild, his treatment while in captivity, and even harassment from other captive whales led to his aggressive behavior which ultimately resulted in the deaths of three individuals, including that of Sea World trainer, Dawn Brancheau. Blackfish unravels the complexities surrounding business, marketing, and the overall welfare of the animals used in the marine park entertainment industry.

March 28, 2:00 – 4:00 pm
BYKN 105
Sharkwater

Sharkwater, an international award winning documentary by Rob Stewart, explores the densest shark populations in the world, demonstrates how the increasing demand for shark-fin soup in Asia is fueling an illegal trade in sharks, and exposes the exploitation and corruption of the shark-hunting industry in the marine reserves of Cocos Island, Costa Rica and the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador.
April 23, 6:00 – 7:30 pm
BYKN 105
Guest Speaker Pete Bethune

Pete Bethune is an avid marine conservationist, who previously worked with the conservation group Sea Shepherd, fighting the illegal whaling activities of Japanese fishermen in the marine sanctuary of the southern ocean. His ship, the Ady Gill, was sunk by Japanese Whalers in a confrontation between the two groups. Pete currently heads the conservation organization Earthrace, and promotes marine conservation around the world. His many campaigns have taken him to a number of different countries where he continues to work with the governments of those countries to protect endangered wildlife and fight against the illegal poaching activities that threatens them. He is currently putting together a new television series, tentatively named “The Operatives”, which focuses on the many issues around the world that threatens the survival of many wildlife species.

May 23, 2:00 – 4:00 pm
BYKN 105
The Elephant in the Living Room

The Elephant in the Living Room takes viewers on a journey deep inside the controversial American subculture of raising the most dangerous animals in the world, as common household pets. Set against the backdrop of a heated national debate, director Michael Webber chronicles the extraordinary story of two men at the heart of the issue - Tim Harrison, an Ohio police officer whose friend was killed by an exotic pet; and Terry Brumfield, a man who struggles to selfishly raise two African lions that he loves like his own family in a small cage in his backyard. Winner of 5 Best Documentary Awards, the film courageously explores the controversy surrounding raising exotic pets in homes across the United States and exposes the shocking reality behind the multi-billion dollar exotic pet industry with stunning photography, inspiring storytelling and unprecedented access into a world rarely seen, right in our own backyard.