

National Geographic Wild's Big Cat Month 2022 celebrates local filmmakers

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National Geographic Wild's 11th Big Cat Month showcases lifetime of wildlife filmmaking by acclaimed local big-cat filmmakers Dereck and Beverly Joubert, including premiere of their first film on cheetahs, narrated by award-winning actor Jeremy Irons. National Geographic Society's commitment to conservation continues through its Big Cats initiative, which supports on-the-ground research and efforts to help protect big cats and their habitats.



National Geographic Wild's 11th annual Big Cat Month takes place this February with a month of programming dedicated to the fiercest felines, creatures of magnificent strength, ferocity and beauty. With visually impressive and powerful stories from around the world, from lions, tigers, cheetahs and leopards to the most unknown and forgotten such as the serval, the African wildcat or the caracal, viewers can look forward to the fiercest programming on their screens every Saturday and Sunday throughout February from 6pm (CAT).

This year, the spotlight will be placed on world-renowned local filmmakers Dereck and Beverley Joubert, with a celebration of their prolific and impactful work, including brand new films. The multiple Emmy-award winning Jouberts have made more than 35 films for National Geographic, published 12 books, half a dozen scientific papers, and have written multiple articles for the *National Geographic* magazine.

On Sunday 5 February at 6pm (CAT), National Geographic Wild (Dstv 182, Starsat 221) kicks off Big Cat Month with *Relentless Enemies*, that chronicles an epic story of how buffalo and lions survive and adapt to each other. A buffalo herd of over 1,200 is forced to move through three lion territories while being confined by the flood waters on a small island in the Okavango. As the buffalo strategise their advancements, the lions react to every move they make, all captured through the Joubert's lens from their home base in Botswana.

Dereck and Beverly Joubert have made dozens of big cat films for National Geographic over nearly 40 years, but never one on cheetahs, and there really is no other big cat on the planet like them. They are the most fragile cats both physically and in numbers, with less than 7,000 remaining on Earth. The premiere of *The Way of the Cheetah* (Sunday 6 February at 6pm) follows Immani, a sleek female with four cubs who must navigate the vast plains of the Mara ecosystem. But living here is also a coalition of five males, and to save her cubs, Immani must avoid them. The film goes under the cover of

darkness with thermal cameras, and the Jouberts capture the lush colours of Africa. However, when it comes to the hunting scenes, these shape shifting cats appear from nowhere in a blur, captured in ultra-high speed motion and the battles turn epic.

In *Big Cat Odyssey (Revealed)* premiering on Sunday 6 February at 6.45pm (CAT), Dereck and Beverly Joubert dive deeper into the issues that surround big cats, specifically African lions and leopards. What struggles do these iconic big cats face? How have these lions and leopards survived and adapted over the decades? The Jouberts lead viewers on a journey through the lives of big cats and their most iconic moments.

The Big Cat content continues throughout the month with various premieres, culminating in *War of the Lions* on Sunday 27 February at 6.45pm. From savannahs bursting with game to deserts with not a drop to drink, all lion kingdoms are not created equal... so who is the *real* king of the beasts?

“Big Cat Month continues to be an exciting annual television event, and certainly a firm fan-favourite. This year we are delighted to honour prolific local filmmakers Beverly and Dereck Joubert, whose lifetime of impactful and thought-provoking documentaries have brought viewers a greater appreciation for Africa’s big cats,” says Christine Service, senior vice president and general manager of The Walt Disney Company Africa. “Families can look forward to a month of fascinating, premiere, in-depth programming that reveals astounding new insights into these remarkable creatures, as well as highlighting the threats they face and the urgent action needed to conserve and protect our big cats for future generations,” she added.

Big cats are facing big challenges. Many populations face potential extinction due to habitat loss, degradation and conflicts with humans. In response, The National Geographic Society, with its long history of raising awareness of the plight of big cats and supporting impactful conservation efforts across the planet, has partnered with the Big Cats Initiative. This initiative, founded by the Jouberts, works with some of the world’s leading big cat experts, funding on-the-ground research and innovative conservation projects to safeguard big cats and their critical habitats, while leading efforts to shine a light on the challenges these species face. Viewers are encouraged to learn more about the Big Cats Initiative and how they can help safeguard big cats in the wild by visiting natgeo.org/bigcats.

Big Cat Month 2022 programme line up:

Relentless Enemies Saturday 5 February at 6pm



A buffalo herd of over 1,200 is forced to move through three lion territories while being confined by the flood waters on a small island in the Okavango. As the buffalo strategise their advancements, the lions react to each and every move they make. From the Joubert's home base in Botswana, comes the epic story of buffalo and lions surviving and adapting to each other. Narrated by Jeremy Irons.

The Way of the Cheetah Sunday 6 February at 6pm



There really is no other big cat on the planet that is like a cheetah. These are the most fragile cats physically and in numbers, now under 7,000 left in the world. Our story tells of Immani, a sleek female with four cubs as they navigate the vast plains of the Mara ecosystem. But living here is also a coalition of five males, and to save her cubs, Immani must avoid them.

The film goes under the cover of darkness with thermal cameras, and we capture the lush colours of Africa, but when it comes to the hunting scenes, as these shape shifting cats appear from nowhere in a blur, captured in ultra-high speed motion, the battles turn epic.

A film by Dereck and Beverly Joubert who have made dozens of big cat film for National Geographic over nearly 40 years, but never one on cheetahs.

Big Cat Odyssey (Revealed) Sunday 6 February at 6.45pm

Dereck and Beverly Joubert dive deeper into the issues that surround big cats, specifically African lions and leopards. What challenges do these iconic big cats face? How have these lions and leopards survived and adapted over the decades? The Jouberts lead viewers on an epic journey through the lives of big cats and their most iconic moments.

Ultimate Enemies Saturday 12 February at 6pm

National Geographic filmmakers, Dereck and Beverly Joubert, explore how some animals are thrust together by the forces of nature—sometimes through a millennium of evolution or even last year's drought. In the aftermath of strange elephant deaths, they piece together a visually stunning story that confirms their theory that lions were hunting elephants. Narrated by Jeremy Irons.

Russia's Wild Tiger Sunday 13 February at 6pm



Russia's Wild Tiger records the battle for survival of the big cats and reveals intimate details of their lives. The animals they prey on are also in the film: tigers couldn't survive without sika deer, Altai wapiti, wild boars and Asian black bears. A young tiger, born in a conservation area, will guide the viewer through the film. *Russia's Wild Tiger* accompanies him throughout the year after he leaves his mother. His search for a territory reveals the problems facing tigers in Russia's Far East, and the conflicts that arise when he strays into human settlements. The young tiger takes the viewer to places where the fate of Siberian tigers will be decided: vast forests, remote villages and the cities at the edge of the wilderness.

Living with Big Cats Sunday 13 February at 6.45pm



Dereck and Beverly Joubert lead viewers on their incredible journey with big cats – from the first time big cats captured their hearts, through their boundless dedication to protecting these iconic predators. This story explores how the Jouberts got started and delves into their personal lives as National Geographic filmmakers and explorers.

Thailand's Wild Cats Saturday 19 February at 6pm

Hidden in the jungles of Thailand lies an ancient kingdom, a last refuge for Thailand's wild cats. Apex hunters, nearly invisible, they bide their time as they search for prey, pursue mates and protect their young. Within this tangled forest, a world of drama and unbridled power awaits the clouded leopard, the Asian fishing cat and the king of the jungle, the tiger.

Eye of the Leopard (Revealed) Sunday 20 February at 6pm

National Geographic filmmakers Dereck and Beverly Joubert set out to create a film on leopards but never imagined they would be seduced by a small, eight-day-old cub named Legadema. *Eye of the Leopard* follows Legadema's journey from a playful cub to a skilled huntress. Narrated by Jeremy Irons.

Shadow Cats Saturday 26 February at 6pm

The serval, caracal and black-footed cat prove they are just as extraordinary as their African wildcat counterparts, the cheetah, lion and leopard.

Eternal Enemies (Revealed) Sunday 27 February at 6pm

The Joubert's Emmy winning film is back with stunning remastered footage. Propelled by Jeremy Irons gripping narration, *Eternal Enemies* reveals the story of conflict between lions and hyenas, relatively unknown or even suspected in the scientific world before this. The intense relationship and enduring rivalry between the two species play out in a battle of survival. Narrated by Jeremy Irons.

War of the Lions Sunday 27 February at 6.45pm

From savannahs bursting with game to deserts with not a drop to drink, all lion kingdoms are not created equal... so who is the *real* King of the Beasts?

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