



# WILD & FREE

FILM FESTIVAL

November 14 - 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Camino Real Cinemas, Goleta CA



*Her Shark Story*



**Bold Stories. Incredible Adventures.  
The Natural World Unleashed!**



  
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FILM FESTIVAL

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# Welcome to the inaugural Wild and Free Film Festival!



‘WAFFE,’ as we like to call it, was born from a desire to create a bold, independent film festival that celebrates adventurous, diverse, and environmentally conscious storytelling from around the world. Our aim is to make Wild and Free a true cultural destination that inspires audiences through thought-provoking films and community experiences. To this end, we’re committed to showcasing work that inspires, defies genre, reimagines convention, and that sparks meaningful conversation.

As a team of local filmmakers with years of experience on the festival circuit, we believe the filmmaker experience is a pillar to our success. As we grow, we’ll continue listening to the creative voices we bring into this community and finding ways to help them develop and thrive in an increasingly complex film and television landscape.

We know it’s easy to feel overwhelmed by the challenges facing our world and our planet. But that’s why stories matter. Bold stories, diverse voices, and engaged communities can ignite/drive/inspire positive change, and that’s what Wild and Free is all about.

This inaugural year would not be possible without our incredible sponsors, especially our title sponsor, Santa Barbara Honda / Santa Barbara Acura, whose support helped turn vision into reality. Launching this first year of the Wild and Free Film Festival has been a monumental task and is not something one can do alone. My deepest thanks also go to our dedicated staff, in particular Francisco Lopez, Nicole Noren, and Shelley LaMon, and to all our tireless volunteers. Filmmaking is a team sport, and building a festival is no different. With one eye already on the future, we’re excited for what’s next. But for now, let’s celebrate this moment and enjoy a weekend of truly remarkable films.

Thank you,  
Gareth Kelly  
Founder & Executive Director





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# How to Fest

All film screenings will take place at the Camino Real Cinemas.

All lunchtime panels will take place inside Auditorium 4 and are free to attend.

The Opening Night reception will take place at the Santa Barbara Fish Market, Goleta Courtyard - a 5-minute walk from the theatre near the DMV.

## Screening Blocks

Each film screening block consists of either several short films or a short film and a feature film. A short Q&A from attending filmmakers will follow some blocks.

## Passes & Tickets

All Access Passes provide complete festival access, including the opening night reception, Saturday night How to Change the World and awards event and priority entry for all film blocks and special events.

Passes can be picked up at the info booth in front of the theatre or from the festival hub located in The Plaza Shopping Center (next to DMV).

All passes and individual film block tickets are available for purchase online or at the info booth at the theatre. Purchase online to skip the line. Simply bring your confirmation email to the info booth in exchange for a ticket.

## Festival Staff

Executive Director - Gareth Kelly  
Festival Manager - Francisco Lopez  
Programming Manager - Nicole Noren  
Production Coordinator - Leonor Reyes  
Operations Coordinator - Shelley LaMon

Advisory Council  
Jill Seltzer, Lauren Trujillo,  
Michael Love, Shelley LaMon

## Volunteers & Special Thanks

Paul Bullock, Kelli McLaughlin, Brittany Zajic, Will Mullen, Olivia Miller, CeCe Street, Joe King, Amber Asher, Ovi Oltean, Scott Seltzer, Bethany Guerrero, Jacqueline Darbyshire, Todd Atkins, Gerri French, Kaia Alexander & Bryce Thompson, Madeleine & Brent LaMon.

# Special Events

## Opening Night

Friday, November 14th, 6:30 pm

Central Coast Premiere

### *Checkpoint Zoo*



An opening night reception will follow the film at the Santa Barbara Fish Market Goleta Courtyard, with music, light bites & drinks for all pass holders and event ticket holders. 21+

Saturday, November 15th, 5:45 pm

10-year Anniversary Screening

### *How To Change The World*



*How to Change the World* will receive the inaugural Wild and Free Spirit Award, to be accepted on behalf of the film by Greenpeace International co-founder Rex Weyler, who will join us for a Q&A.



In 1971, a group of friends sail into a nuclear test zone and their protest captures the world's imagination, giving birth to Greenpeace and defining the modern green movement. Media savvy from the beginning, these pioneers captured their seat-of-their-pants activist adventures on 16mm film. From this vivid archive and sly narration by Robert Hunter, an early guiding force of the organization, Jerry Rothwell has created a thrilling, sometimes terrifying film.

The Wild and Free Film Festival Awards will also take place at this special event.

Event entry is included for all pass holders. Single tickets to this event can also be purchased online or at the door subject to availability.

# Jurors

## **Rekha Sharma**



Many know Rekha Sharma from her breakout role as the Cylon / politician Tory Foster on the critically acclaimed series *Battlestar Galactica*. More recently lauded for her work on Showtime's *Yellowjackets*, NBC's *Transplant*, and CBS's iconic *Star Trek: Discovery*, Rekha's numerous credits include *The Cleaning Lady*, *Roswell: New Mexico*, *The Imperfects*, *The 100*, and *Supernatural*.

Rekha's early years were spent in the forests of Canada, where her deep love and commitment to the planet began. Now based in Los Angeles, Rekha loves doing what she can to be a part of the solution and make film sets greener.

## **Mark Romanov**



Mark Romanov is a freelance cinematographer and filmmaker based in Santa Barbara, California, whose work spans topside, aerial, and underwater capture. He specializes in natural history and documentary filmmaking, with projects taking him from the Arctic to the Amazon. Mark's credits include major international broadcasters and brands such as National Geographic, BBC, Apple, Discovery and PBS, on projects focusing on wildlife, adventure, and environmental storytelling.

## **Stuart Volkow, PGA**



Stuart Volkow is a producer (PGA), technologist, and entrepreneur whose career bridges science, technology, and entertainment. A graduate of the American Film Institute, he has worked in film development at Sony Tri-Star and Phoenix Pictures, produced early VR and interactive media, and led ventures in broadband TV, AI-driven music tech, and science communication. Stuart has served as a DARPA analyst, taught at UCLA, and currently advises startups in aerospace, medical robotics, and media innovation.

## **Téana David**



A filmmaker creating at the intersection of ecology, mythology, and social evolution, Téana David works across documentary and narrative genres. Recent projects include the Prime Video series, *Changing of the Gods* (Impact Producer), and numerous Amazon Rainforest livestreams, films, and messaging campaigns (Director/Producer/Writer). Raised on Vancouver Island and committed to living in reciprocity with Mother Earth, Téana is currently producing a streaming series based on the feminine-forward fantasy novel, *Gaia Codex*. She is the former Executive Director of the ILLUMINATE Film Festival and the Shift Your World Film Festival and serves as Board Vice President of The Tribal Trust Foundation.

# Panels

**All Panels will be in Auditorium 4 - Free Admission**

**Saturday, November 15**

**12:30 pm to 1:30 pm**

**Subject TBA**

**Sunday, November 16**

**12:30 pm to 1:30 pm**

**Subject TBA**



# Festival Schedule

Friday, November 14<sup>th</sup>

Schedule subject to change. All blocks 60 - 90 minutes.



## Opening Night: *Checkpoint Zoo*

6:30 pm Camino Real Cinemas

Auditorium 2



Saturday, November 15<sup>th</sup>

Auditorium 3

10:15 am

Art of the Wild Block

Auditorium 4

10:00 am

Winged Wonders Block

Lunch: Noon to 2:00 pm

Filmmaker Panel 12:30 pm to 1:30pm Auditorium 4 - Free Entry

2:00 pm

Nature as Healing Block

2:15 pm

Ocean Adventures Block

4:00 pm

Wild Mountains Block

5:45 pm

*How to Change the World*

Special Event

Sunday, November 16<sup>th</sup>

Morning

10:30 am

Earth, Wind & Fire Block

All Sunday Screenings in Auditorium 4

Lunch: Noon to 2:00 pm

Filmmaker Panel 12:30pm to 1:30 pm

Auditorium 4 - Free Entry

Afternoon

2:00 pm

California Stories Block

Community Sunday - All Blocks Free Admission, subject to theatre capacity.

Passholders receive priority entry. Passes and tickets available at [www.wildandfreefilm.org](http://www.wildandfreefilm.org)

# Feature Films



## Her Shark Story

Chile - 76 mins

**Directed by Ignacio Walker**  
**SoCal Premiere**

This is the story of Sofia, a young marine biologist from Galapagos in Ecuador, who reconnects with her absent father through their shared passion for trying to save the biggest shark in the world, the Whale Shark.

**Block: Ocean Adventures**

**11/15, 2:15pm**

## Elemental - Reimagine Wildfire

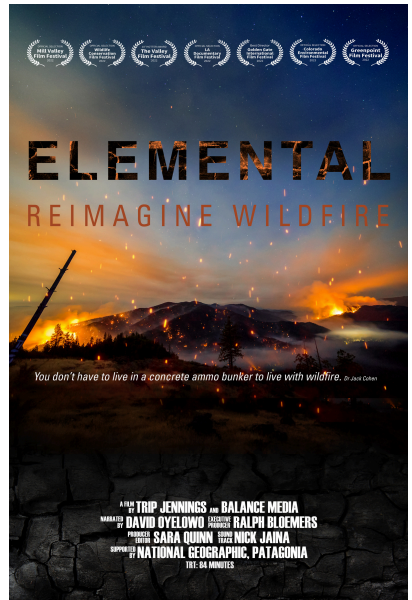
USA - 51 mins

**Directed by Trip Jennings**

Elemental takes viewers on a journey with the top experts in the nation to better understand fire. We follow the harrowing escape from Paradise as the town ignited from wind-driven embers and burned within a few hours of the fire's start.

**Block: Earth, Wind & Fire**

**11/16, 10:30am**



# Feature Films

## Into the Carpathian Wild

Slovakia - 52 mins

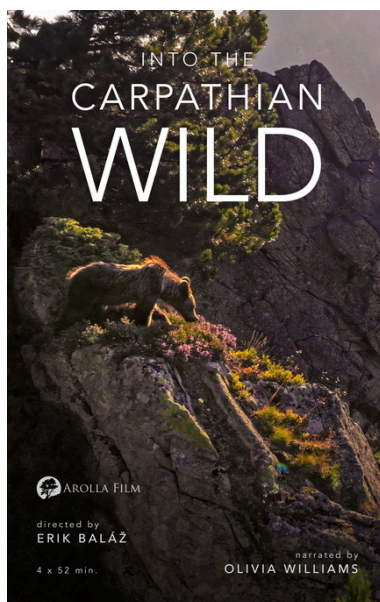
Directed by Erik Baláž

North American Premiere

Of all the mountain ranges in Europe, the Carpathians host the most primeval forests, the largest populations of bears, wolves, and lynx, along with an amazing diversity of other creatures.

Block: Wild Mountains

11/14, 4 pm



## Sitka's Hidden Wonders

USA - 43 mins

Directed by Ben Hamilton

California Premiere

Told with quiet intimacy and sweeping cinematography, the film reveals the hidden layers of a coastal ecosystem shaped by extremes—where humpbacks feed in nutrient-rich waters, bears wander temperate rainforests, seabirds emerge only under moonlight, and glowing plankton spark life from the abyss.

Block: Winged Wonders

11/14, 10 am



# Short Films A - Z

## Bat Boy



USA - 20 mins

Directed by Aaron Lemle

Andre, a young man on the autism spectrum, finds solace in visiting the bats that live under the bridge near his house. One day, his world is turned upside down when the bats disappear.

Block: Nature as Healing

11/15, 2 pm

## Battle of the Blues



USA - 26 mins

Directed by Adam Ryokichi Ernster

Exploring the majestic blue whales (Balaenoptera musculus) that grace the waters off the Southern California coast, a population of the largest creatures ever living on Earth.

Block: California Stories

11/16, 2 pm

## The Bees & The Birds



USA - 12 mins, Student Film

Directed by Olly Johnson

California's native bees are facing an uncertain future. The film explores this unfolding environmental crisis through the lens of a vibrant community garden that has become a safe haven for native bees, birds, and other wildlife.

Block: California Stories

11/16, 2 pm

## Beito



USA - 12 mins

Directed by Isabella Harris Hamlin

California Premiere

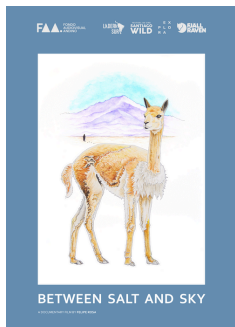
Three skiers visit their friend in Norway and film a ski movie along the way, despite being amateur skiers, only having one camera, and knowing nothing about the area they are in.

Block: Nature as Healing

11/15, 2 pm

# Short Films A - Z

## Between Salt and Sky



**Brazil/Chile - 17 mins**

**Directed by Felipe Rosa**

**West Coast Premiere**

In the heart of the Bolivian altiplano, where the infinite white of the Salar de Uyuni meets the deep blue of the sky, an epic battle unfolds.

**Block: Art of the Wild**

**11/15, 10:15 am**

## Bill's Story



**UK - 11 mins**

**Directed by Matthew Jarvis**

**U.S. Premiere**

Isle of Wight resident, Bill Smith, has been swimming in the Solent for much of his life and firmly believes this has contributed to his amazing longevity.

**Block: Nature as Healing**

**11/15, 2 pm**

## The Chase



**USA - 18 mins**

**Directed by Josh Bogardus**

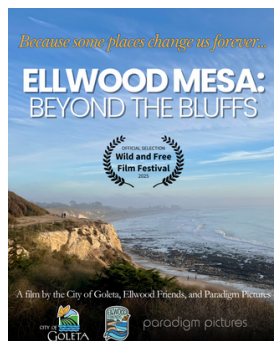
**First Theatrical Screening**

The Chase is an East Coast ski film following Blake Keogh as he searches for snow, solitude, and connection.

**Block: Nature as Healing**

**11/15, 2 pm**

## Ellwood Mesa: Beyond the Bluffs



**USA - 22 mins**

**Directed by Paul Westacott**

**World Premiere**

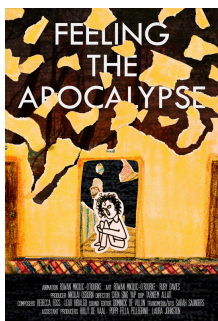
The compelling story of how the Goleta community came together decades ago to protect the Ellwood Mesa and the perseverance that still exists today to steward the land for all to enjoy for generations to come.

**Block: California Stories**

**11/16, 2 pm**

# Short Films A - Z

## Feeling the Apocalypse



Canada - 7 mins

Directed by Chen Sing Yap

A psychotherapist struggling with climate anxiety explores what it means to live in a dying world. (Animation)

**Block: Nature as Healing**

11/15, 2 pm

## Hoy'ri



Brazil - 14 mins

Directed by Marcio Pimenta

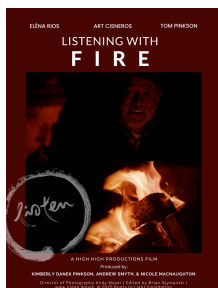
California Premiere

In the world's driest desert, where stromatolites — the oldest fossil evidence of life on the planet — still persist, paleontologists excavate the past in search of answers about the evolution of life and the cosmos.

**Block: Art of the Wild**

11/15, 10:15 am

## Listening with Fire



USA - 90 seconds

Directed by Kimberly Danek Pinkson

In an intimate fire gathering, on sacred land along the coast of California, our short film invites viewers to reconnect with Grandpa Fire as a source of wisdom, rebirth, and illumination.

**Block: Earth, Wind & Fire**

11/16, 10:30 am

## Love Birds



USA - 28 mins

Directed by Elliott Kennerson, Angel Morris

George and Molly's research on "lesbian seagulls" quickly triggers both outrage and jubilation in a nation grappling with the rise of the LGBTQ+ rights movement, and it threatens to tear apart their own relationship.

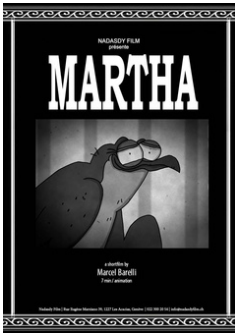
**Block: Winged Wonders**

11/15, 10:00 am



## Short Films A - Z

## Martha



## Switzerland - 7 mins

Directed by Marcel Barelli

A fake documentary about a true story: An old silent documentary from the 1910s has been found and restored. It tells the story of the most abundant bird on Earth, exterminated in just a few decades by human brutality.

(Animation)

### Block: Art of the Wild

11/15, 10:15 am

## Oneness



## USA - 90 Seconds

Directed by Barbara Doux

In a world that stretches far and wide,  
there are moments when time slows, and  
hearts connect beyond borders.

### Block: Art of the Wild

11/15, 10:15 am

## Ocean Memory Origins

**USA - 6 mins**

Directed by Brendan Byrne

Nereid Biomaterials is a women-led company developing ocean-degradable bioplastics for the blue economy. Nereid's proprietary formulations can speed up or slow down degradation—an unprecedented advancement in plastic design.

### Block: Ocean Adventures

11/15, 2:15 pm

## The Opening Address



**USA - 10 mins**

Directed by Jess Lowe Chaverri, Konwanahktoha  
Alvera Sargent

This film is presented by The Akwesasne Freedom School, a sovereign Mohawk immersion institution dedicated to preserving the language and culture that colonization sought to erase. Through the wisdom of elders, they ensure the Mohawk language and identity thrive for future generations.

### Block: Art of the Wild

11/15, 10:15 am

# Short Films A - Z

## Penguins of the Point



Canada - 17 mins

Directed by Derek Robitaille

U.S. Premiere

Exploring the daily lives of penguins at Volunteer Point in the Falkland Islands, showcasing the resilience of these remarkable birds as they face both predators and modern threats such as climate change, commercial fishing, and avian influenza.

Block: Winged Wonders

11/15, 10:00 am

## Punchline



USA - 10 mins

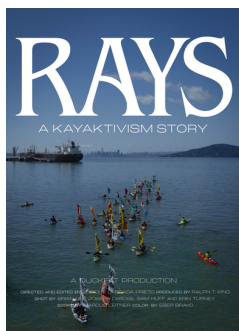
Directed by Dan Holz, Kaare Iverson

Eeland Stribling is many things: fly fisherman, wildlife biologist, Colorado native - but most notably, he is an avid stand-up comedian.

Block: Nature as Healing

11/15, 2 pm

## Rays: A Kayaktivism Story



USA - 13 mins

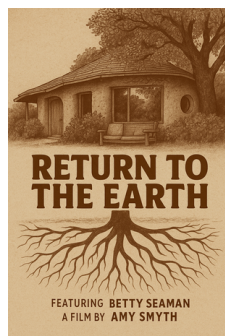
Directed by Enrique Labrada Prieto

Rays: A Kayaktivism Story follows a group of activists who take to the water in kayaks to confront the fossil fuel industry that is directly threatening their community.

Block: California Stories

11/16, 2 pm

## Return to the Earth



USA - 7 mins

Directed by Amy Smyth

This intimate micro-documentary tells the story of Betty Seaman - a mother, builder, and teacher - who constructed her family's cob home with her own hands. What began as a quest for affordable, sustainable shelter grew into a living classroom for resilience and community.

Block: Earth, Wind & Fire

11/16, 10:30 am

# Short Films A - Z

## Trial by Fire



USA - 10 mins

Directed by Alex Astrella

An exclusive preview of an upcoming feature-length documentary exploring the challenges facing incarcerated firefighting programs from Executive Producer Danny Trejo.

Block: Earth, Wind & Fire

11/16, 10:30 am

## Valley of Growth



USA - 15 mins, Student Film

Directed by Rachel Burnett

Two women climbers, one a veteran and the other a novice, work together to reshape the climbing community in an ever-evolving landscape.

Block: California Stories

11/16, 2 pm

## Wildflowers



Canada - 38 mins

Directed by Trixie Pacis

Mountain writer and historian Meghan J. Ward recruits a team of creative women to revisit Mary Schäffer Warren's 1908 expedition to Maligne Lake, in Alberta's Jasper National Park.

Block: Wild Mountains

11/15, 4 pm

## Special Thanks to

Travis Vassallo Foundation, Jill & Scott Seltzer, Volentine Foundation



Wild and Free Film Festival is fiscally sponsored by Creative Visions, a 501c3 nonprofit organization that supports creative activists, those that use the arts and media to ignite social change. EIN 39-1902814



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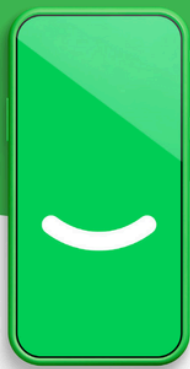
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