

Vietnam: A Fresh Look

Television Documentary Proposal

Chrysalis Films
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Abstract

This proposal outlines a 30-minute program about community-based efforts to preserve and recover natural habitats in northern Vietnam. The program features two trips by scientists and officials to monitor progress on this work: to the Hoang Lien Mountains and to Ha Long Bay.

Documentary Setting and Purpose

Vietnam. For an American audience, the name *Vietnam* recalls scenes of war and despair. This program introduces the Vietnam of 2004: proud and independent, with a vision for its land, its heritage, and its future.

Preserving the remaining fragile ecosystems of northern Vietnam depends on a dialog among several groups: the Vietnamese government, tourists, local communities, ethnic minorities, and scientific advisors. The documentary will bring its viewers into this dialog through an exploration of community-based projects to preserve and recover natural habitat. The Hoang Lien Mountains and Ha Long Bay, two of our planet's most alluring natural areas, are the documentary's setting. Its subject is endangered orchids, hibiscus flowers and Taiwanna trees; sea creatures, birds, black gibbons and golden-headed langurs; scientists, ethnic minorities, and ecotourism workers.

Centuries of human habitation have created a rich cultural heritage, but human impact on the landscape has been significant. Here, as in many other places on our globe, people's daily life has come into conflict with the needs of the natural community. Economic pressures on this country emerging from a third-world economy are high. The per capita yearly income is about \$430, and intensive farming is an essential part of subsistence. A cross-section of the population recognizes that preservation natural resources is essential to meet current and future needs for shelter, food, medicine, recreation, and economic growth. This documentary will explore their dialog that has already begun to rescue northern Vietnam's biodiversity from an uncertain future.



Hoang Lien Mountains

The documentary production team will venture into the Hoang Lien Mountains in the southernmost area of the Himalayas in the company of scientists, government officials, local observers and interpreters. Three areas will be highlighted, illustrating innovative ways that groups have collaborated to further the preservation of their natural heritage.

Mount Fansipan attracts hikers, climbers, and tourists to this area of cool climate and majestic mountains. Ecotourism has brought much needed money into the area, but viewers will learn how the number of visitors and the infrastructure needed to support them have had an impact on the health of the ecosystem.

Our trip to **Van Ban** will show the traditional way of life of the Tay and Hmong ethnic minority people—spinning yarn from hemp, dying with indigo, cultivating the land. The program will take viewers on a hike to the last stand of the Taiwanna trees, only 130 known trees of which remain. Of the 28 species of endemic conifer species in Vietnam, 21 are thought to be endangered. Viewers will see the cultivation of seedlings and GPS mapping of existing trees.

Mu Cang Chai will introduce the audience to the western black crested gibbon, an endangered lesser ape whose population is monitored by the local Hmong ethnic minority from Na Hang village. Viewers will meet the men who once hunted these graceful animals for food and ethnological reasons, but who now catch their prey with “camera trapping” to estimate their numbers.



Ha Long Bay

Ha Long Bay, in the Gulf of Tonkin, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, dotted with three thousand limestone islets rising from emerald waters.

In the second half of the program, we will join scientists and community organizers on a boat tour of the bay. The production team will visit two regions with aesthetic, scientific and cultural significance: the floating communities of Ha Long Bay and Cat Ba Island.

The **floating communities of Ha Long Bay**, like many areas in Vietnam, are rich in tradition. No refrigeration here! Fish are caught and kept in live wells until dinnertime. At the same time that communities are loyal to their customs, they have also developed a new approach to conservation: environmental education. Children demonstrated this new spirit in a recent drawing contest. This documentary will feature winners of the contest presenting their work and their thoughts behind it. From the images in the children's drawings, we will move our attention to actual views of the karst limestone islands that fill Ha Long Bay.

Perhaps the legend of Ha Long, meaning "the descending dragon," may offer a new look at an old idea. The dragon, according to legend, protects Vietnam from her adversaries. Perhaps the understanding of conservation expressed by the school children will ultimately also protect Vietnam's fragile habitats and rare organisms. Our boat journey will introduce viewers to the players in this karst coastal and tropical forest ecosystems: the sea creatures, the birds, the yellow slipper orchid, the Ha Long cycad, and the sea hibiscus, an unusual plant whose bloom turns from lemon yellow at daybreak to red in the evening.

Cat Ba Island has suffered from extensive deforestation due to burning, done to facilitate the wild honey harvest. Viewers will meet villagers who now keep bees rather than harvest wild honey, and who are successfully selling their product. They will also visit the Cat Ba National Park to get a glimpse of the endangered golden-headed langur whose habitat is threatened by this deforestation.



Style of Documentary

The documentary will have a visceral feel. The filmmakers want our viewers to feel the mud between their toes as they hike the Hoang Lien Mountains, and to feel the breeze on their faces on Ha Long Bay. The spirit of the people who live and work in these regions will add to the adventure, evoking a sense of beauty, history, science, and responsibility.

We as filmmakers are interested in preserving the natural state in the areas we focus on, but assume a journalistic stance and allow all sides to be understood.

There are no simple answers, but this film will show the steps being taken to preserve natural ecosystems of northern Vietnam. And in its making and broadcast, it will become one of those steps.

Project Team

Chip Curry, Producer-Director. See attachments for Statement of Qualifications.

Dr. Mark Infield, PhD, Project Coordinator in Vietnam.

Director, Conservation Support Program in Vietnam, Flora and Fauna International.

Researcher in the social and economic dynamics of a protected area in South Africa. Dissertation examined the cultural underpinnings of attitudes toward a national park in Uganda, focusing on conflicting values regarding land use. Twenty years as a researcher and technical advisor on protected area management in Africa. Two years as a conservation project team leader in Vietnam.

Dr. Sheelagh O'Reilly, PhD, Trip leader, Hoang Lien Mountains segment.

Team Leader, Community Based Conservation of the Hoang Lien Mountain Ecosystem, Flora and Fauna International.

Rural development and community-based natural resource management specialist. Five years experience in northern mountains of Vietnam.

Bérenghère Prince, MSc Trip Leader, Ha Long Bay.

Project Manager, Coastal Biodiversity Support Project of Ha Long Bay, Flora and Fauna International.

With advanced degrees in International Business Law and Fisheries Economics, has worked with French Ministry of agriculture, food, fisheries and rural affairs. Held post as Deputy Head of Regulation and International Affairs Unit.

Production Technical Details

A lightweight equipment package is suggested to keep cost low and to enable foot travel over mountainous terrain.

Format Standard definition, NTSC (HD optional).

Editing Digitally edited at Chrysalis Studio, San Jose, CA Mastered in Betacam SP or desired format.

Scripting Chrysalis Films.

Narration Chrysalis Films, or to be determined.

Music Licensed, supplied by Chrysalis Films.

Budget

We propose to shoot this documentary during October 2004. The program will be edited and delivered for final review by early 2005. Cost, including all production expenses listed above and airfare for the documentary director to and from Vietnam, will be \$32,000.

Chip Curry, Statement of Qualifications

Film Producer, Director

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Director

Chrysalis Films

San Jose, CA

1985-present

Producer and director of video programs. Roles include producing, directing, script writing, editing, packaging, budgeting, contracting for broadcast.

Recent Productions

Point Bonita Lighthouse: Vital Link Between Keepers and Sailors	National Park Service KCSM TV (A PBS Affiliate) in rotational play	29 min	Sausalito, CA
CSB Technology Academy	California School for the Blind	10 min	Fremont, CA
CSB Low Vision Clinic	California School for the Blind	14 min	Fremont, CA
Albinism: The People, The Challenge	National Organization for Albinism; grant from AT&T	24 min	East Hampstead, NH
San Francisco Festival of the Mandolins	Slavonic Cultural Center	14 min	San Francisco, CA
The First Ever San Francisco Tam Fest	Slavonic Cultural Center	14 min	San Francisco, CA
Timpany Center Hydrotherapy	Tympany Aquatic Center	14 min	San Jose, CA

Program Director

Independent Media Artists' Group

Palo Alto, CA

1995-2000

Produced a monthly speaker series featuring regional and nationally recognized directors, writers, animators, cinematographers of independent film.

Station Manager

KCAT TV

Los Gatos, CA

1988-90

Managed this community access television station. Produced over 150 programs of comedy, news, music, public interest. Supervised studio equipment calibration and maintenance. Taught broadcast video production to community producers. Led fund-raising and development efforts, successfully securing donations of time and money.

Video Instructor

Los Gatos High School

Los Gatos, CA

1986-90

Taught *The Video Workshop*, a weekly class in traditional and experimental video production. Subject matter included creative techniques, composition, editing, camera technique, visual story telling, location, production.

Publications

Shooting In Extreme Conditions

Cover article, Digital Video Magazine, August 2003

Creating a Video Documentary and Building Community

National Association of Interpretation Sourcebook, November 2002

Specialized Training

Video Technology. Sony Video Institute. Los Angeles, CA.

Comedy Directing. Rockport International Film Workshop. Rockport, ME.

Education

Bachelor of Arts, St. Louis University, St. Louis, MO