

# Critical Kingdoms



Wildlife on the Edge

**4 x 48 min. HD**

Critical Kingdoms takes viewers on an urgent journey around the world to witness what's at stake and what is happening. Through captivating storytelling and eye-opening facts, Critical Kingdoms will inform, astonish, entertain ñ and get folks talking and tweeting.



## Main concept :

Our planet is home to 8.7 million different kinds of life, and about 90 percent haven't even been named or catalogued. Many might never be: the Earth is in the midst of one of its greatest extinction events. The last one wiped out 75 percent of life on the planet. Scientists estimate we're losing dozens species every day to natural and human causes. Critical Kingdoms takes viewers on an urgent journey around the world to witness what's at stake and what is happening. Through captivating storytelling and eye-opening facts, Critical Kingdoms will inform, astonish, entertain and get folks talking and tweeting.

- 1. Where are we?** In a quick introduction, lush, sumptuous shots will establish our Critical Kingdom. An animated map will orient us. Here is a place that's seemingly still thriving and certainly worth protecting. We'll meet the unique animals that make their homes here, perfectly attuned to their environment for now.
- 2. Geography is destiny.** Tremendous natural forces shaped this Critical Kingdom. Shifting continents, elevation, and mighty rivers all give evolution an opportunity to try something a little different. We'll see why this Critical Kingdom and its fauna are like no others on Earth.
- 3. Serpent in the garden.** We discover that this paradise is really a Critical Kingdom under siege, and many animals struggle to cope. Here we see that nature is obstinate but also fragile. When big changes come – rising tides, warming climate, urbanization, farming – nature can't adjust in time, tipping a delicate balance. We'll see how habitats shrink and animals struggle to adapt, become endangered or go extinct. But the changes keep coming, and will keep coming. Some of the harm is preventable or even reversible. The first step is awareness. The second is action.
- 4. The bigger picture.** This Critical Kingdom may be isolated, but its wildlife is still an irreplaceable part of our larger world. People and governments are finally waking up to the fact that it needs saving. They're working hard to come up with solutions to slow or reverse the destruction. We'll look at what's being done to protect endangered wildlife.
- 5. Hard lessons.** The loss of an animal creates a ripple effect throughout its ecosystem. Sometimes it even benefits a rival species, forever altering the evolutionary pathway. If we can take the lessons learned from an extinction and apply it to wildlife facing similar threats, we might call that progress.

## Eps 1 \_ The Atlantic Forest

It's the biodiversity hotspot that few people have heard of and it's one of the most threatened in the world. One-fifth the size of the Amazon rainforest, but with 75 percent the number of mammal species, the Atlantic Forest (Mata Atlantica) is the exclusive home to six species of rare primates. There's the squirrel-size black-faced lion tamarin that wasn't discovered until 1990, and the golden lion tamarin, named for its impressive mane. Also two species of Muriqui. At around 20 pounds, they're the largest of the New World primates. Geographically isolated, southern muriqui have the vestiges of opposable thumbs, northern ones have none. But thumbs or not, muriqui, tamarins, and hundreds of other species of mammals, reptiles and amphibians are hanging on for their lives.

Encompassing almost the entire southeast coast of Brazil and its southern tip all the way to Paraguay, the Atlantic Forest once spanned an area three times the size of California. Today it's smaller than Ohio, and fragmented by roads, ranches, and utilities. Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo are smack in the middle of it. Much of the wildlife that once roamed the tropical rainforests, savannas, dry forests, coastal dunes, and other niches of the Atlantic Forest now survive only in national parks and reserves. But occasionally there's room for optimism. In 2006 a blonde capuchin was discovered, not seen since the 19th century. Alas, it too is critically endangered.

**Animals Featured\*:** lion tamarins, muriquis (woolly spider monkeys), blonde capuchin, snake-necked turtle, maned sloth, curasow, gold frog, arboreal mouse.

**Estimated Number of Animals Endangered or Threatened:** 60 percent of Brazil's threatened animal species live in the Atlantic Forest.





### Eps 2\_ Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands

Madagascar, twice the size of the United Kingdom, is sometimes called the eighth continent. Seventy-five percent of the animals on this checkerboard of climate zones and geographic niches are found nowhere else on the planet. And once here, they diversify like crazy: Dozens of lemurs, including the world's largest and the world's smallest, and lemurs that can sing and dance; 30 species of furry, insect-eating tenrecs; almost half the world's chameleon species, including an inch-long one that's among the world's smallest reptiles; 300 species of frogs, including the sticky, orange tomato frog; and 115 birds found only here. Even as land development is destroying ecosystems, between 1999 and 2010, scientists discovered more than 100 new species of mammals and reptiles here. Ironically, this rich diversity makes Madagascar a target for exotic pet trafficking, which poses a serious threat.

Further out in the Indian Ocean, the 115-or-so islands of the Seychelles boast 30 species of reptiles and amphibians found nowhere else, along with the world's largest population of giant tortoises.

**Animals Featured\*:** *silky sifaka, indrie, and other lemurs; ploughshare tortoise, aye-aye, tenrec, chameleons, orange tomato frog*

**Estimated Number of Animals Endangered or Threatened:** 384



### Eps 3\_ Sri Lanka

About the size of West Virginia or Ireland, Sri Lanka broke off from the Indian subcontinent about 200 million years ago. Life left stranded on the new island was left to manage on its own. The island has become one of the world's biodiversity hotspots, thanks to its microclimates and its patchwork of forests, grasslands, inland wetlands, and coastal and marine ecosystems. The result is an amphibian paradise, with as many as 140 endemic species including 50 kinds of shrub frogs. The forests of Sri Lanka are home to 20 species of birds that live exclusively on the island, and another 80 that vary genetically from their relatives on the Indian mainland. But for larger animals, such as elephants and leopards, genetic diversity seems to be on the decline because of the lack of partners to mate with.

**Animals Featured\*:** *slender loris, Asian elephant, toque macaque, leopard, green turtle, purple-faced leaf monkey*

**Estimated Number of Animals Endangered or Threatened:** 155



### Eps 4\_ Costa Rica

Costa Rica's landmass accounts for only one-third of one percent of the Earth's surface, but it is one of the most biodiverse places in the world. Four percent of the planet's total estimated species live on its land or in its sea territory. Between 2011 and 2013, scientists recognized no fewer than 5,000 new species there. Most are plants and insects, but also mollusks, fish, reptiles and birds. The tiny country has always been in a tug-o-war between clearing agricultural land and preserving its biodiversity. It seems that lately, nature may be winning as the country realizes that preserving paradise has its economic (and karmic) rewards.

**Animals Featured\*:** *zzz, Rice Water Rat, Central American Tapir, Harris's Olingo*

**Estimated Number of Animals Endangered or Threatened:** 156



Additional episodes: 1. Alaska 2. Tanzania 3. Indonesia 4. Congo 5. Burma (Myanmar)

\*Tentative; subject to available footage



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Written by Steven Zorn  
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