



# LIGHTS, CAMERA, QUACK-TION!

WRITE, DIRECT AND STAR IN YOUR OWN WILDLIFE DOCUMENTARY

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Scripting dialogue to inform
- Directing a film
- Editing sound and video clips

🕒 2 HOURS +

MODERATE ADULT INVOLVEMENT

DIFFICULTY: ★★★★★

## YOUR MISSION

*'An understanding of the natural world is a source of not only great curiosity, but great fulfilment.'* – Sir David Attenborough.

Inspired by Sir David Attenborough's numerous award-winning documentaries, AQUILA is searching for the next inspiring naturalist to share their love of wildlife with the world.

**Your brief is to present a wildlife mini-documentary film.**

## GET STARTED

### PHASE 1:

**Okay ecologists, what's the setting for your documentary?** Under a log in the back garden? In the canopy of the giant oak trees in the park? Once you have chosen your setting, spend some time just watching. What can you see? Make some notes in a notebook. Be sure not to interrupt the busy bugs. Instead, observe from a distance and be respectful of their homes.

### PHASE 2:

**Now you've got some notes, it's time to script the dialogue.** Write your script out in full, giving plenty of facts about the animals and insects. Include lots of interesting adjectives and descriptive language to keep your audience engaged. You will want to deliver some of the dialogue in front of the camera, and keep some for narration. Any dialogue which is narration should be written as 'VO:' (voice-over) in your script. Don't know enough about your chosen beasties? Best get researching!

### PHASE 3:

**Film your footage.** Make sure you collect a variety of shots, including some close ups, establishing shots of the whole setting and some medium shots of you talking through some of your dialogue, perching carefully to the side of the animals' homes. Are your chosen animals too shy? Why not make some finger puppets of the animals to make sure you get a good shot of them in their natural habitat! Just be sure to let your viewers know it's a reconstruction.

## YOU WILL NEED

- Notebook
- Pencil
- Green space, garden or park
- Smart phone
- Free movie editing software

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#### PHASE 4:

**Now that you have your footage, record any voice-over dialogue as separate audio files.** Most phones have a voice recording app. Apple phones have a 'voice memo' app, which you can use to record and then export your files to save in your iCloud drive. From there you can import the audio to iMovie. Remember to warm up your voice first and consider your tone and pitch. David Attenborough talks with a very calm tone and a deep pitch to sound authoritative.

#### PHASE 5:

**So, budding Spielbergs and Attenboroughs...** You've got your footage, you've recorded the dialogue. Just the editing stands between you and that BAFTA for best wildlife documentary. To do this, you will need some editing software. On Apple devices you can use iMovie. On Windows laptops and computers you could use Windows Movie Maker, and on other mobile devices you can download free video editing software. Cut together all of your clips, your narration, and add some music in. You will need to watch your film through several times to spot any editing mistakes and make sure your cuts are well timed to your music.

#### PHASE 6:

**Set up a screen and roll out the red carpet ready for your documentary premiere!**

**We want to see your award-winning documentaries. Don't forget to send your short films to the address on the readers' page of the AQUILA website, and we'll share as many as we can.**

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- \* How will you structure your documentary? Are you going to do a 'day in the life' study of a single animal or insect, or will you describe lots of different animals and insects, but spend a short time on each?
- \* What is the best order for your documentary? Does it need to run in time order or do you want to create short episodic chunks that follow different themes?
- \* The more interesting footage you collect, the choosier you can be, and the more visually exciting your documentary will become. Why not watch some Attenborough documentaries for inspiration?
- \* What type of language will you use in your dialogue? An audience needs rich description to help them understand the visual images on the screen. You should use a mixture of adjectives, simile, metaphor and rhetorical questions to keep your audience engaged.
- \* What sort of music is suitable for the background of your documentary?
- \* **CHALLENGE:** Feeling musical? Why not write and record your own piece of music to accompany your documentary?