

MacGillivray Freeman's

AMERICA WILD

National Parks Adventure

ABOUT THE FILM

*Everybody needs beauty as well as bread,
places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal
and give strength to body and soul alike.*
~ John Muir, 1912

A trio of adventurers' quest to experience America's wildest, most historic and most naturally beautiful places becomes the ultimate off-trail adventure in MacGillivray Freeman Films' (MFF) **America Wild: National Parks Adventure**, narrated by Academy Award® winner Robert Redford. Timed to the 100th anniversary of the U.S. National Park Service, the film is produced in association with Brand USA and presented globally by Expedia, Inc. and Subaru of America, Inc., with major support from the Giant Dome Theater Consortium. Immersive IMAX® 3D takes audiences soaring up exposed rock faces, hurtling down steep mountain cliffs and exploring other-worldly realms found within America's most legendary outdoor places. Along the way, the film becomes at once an action-packed celebration of the wonders of nature and a soulful reflection on what wilderness means to us all.

The power of America's national parks is undeniable. The family park vacation has become an iconic, beloved, even satirized rite-of-passage. Millions have packed up the car and the kids to hike through impossibly lush forests, to gaze up towering cliffs and down plunging canyons, to witness the breathtaking arcs of national and natural history, and most of all to share unpredictable moments of laughter and wonder amid the protected treasures of this land.

The national parks are so much a part of the collective American experience, it's barely possible to imagine the U.S. without them. Yet, perhaps because the parks are so entwined in the culture, they're also easily taken for granted. That will change in 2016 as America marks the 100th birthday of the National Park Service ... and ponders what might have been if it was never created at all. Dubbed one of the nation's greatest and most defining ideas, since 1916 the National Park Service has forged 400-plus sites, protecting a staggering diversity of landscapes, creatures and stories.

As this momentous birthday approached, two-time Academy Award® nominated filmmaker Greg MacGillivray felt a personal imperative to pay homage to the parks that have been the source of so much creative fuel throughout his career. He felt now was the perfect time to explore the hard-fought story of how the parks were born, why the whole world flocks to them, and their never-ending power and mystery.

The journey he set out on kindled his most visually ambitious and vivid giant-screen film to date -- a film that is not only a sweeping overview of the national parks' history but equally an adrenaline-pumping, rock-climbing, mountain-biking odyssey ... and a moving true-life tale of friendship, art and communion inspired by nature's grandeur.

"In the making of this film, we visited more than 30 national parks, looking for things we'd never seen before and images that blew us away," says MacGillivray. "There's beauty and magnificence in every national park, but we looked for places that would be the most amazing on the IMAX screen. The story of the national parks is a big one, but for me the most important idea is that these parks belong to everyone, to all the people. The parks give us a sense of awe, a sense of wonder, and in return I think we understand what a tremendous gift they will be for future generations of Americans."

Adds producer Shaun MacGillivray: "This is a film we have longed to make for so many years -- to weave together a powerful adventure story with a chance for people to experience a taste of all the wonder that await deep within the national parks. We're so excited to bring audiences an experience of the parks that we feel is not like any other and hopefully will help spark future stewards."

Sums up narrator Robert Redford, a renowned actor, filmmaker and leading conservationist: "***America Wild*** captures the stunning beauty of our wild places and reminds us these landscapes are an essential part of the human spirit."

MEET YOUR ROAD-TRIP BUDDIES: CONRAD, RACHEL AND MAX

To take audiences into the national parks in a dynamic way, MFF hit the highway with an unusual trio of family and friends whose passion for the parks is as infectious as it is profound. They are world-renowned climber Conrad Anker; his step-son, adventure photographer Max Lowe; and Max's long-time friend, climber and artist Rachel Pohl. Together, the threesome seemed to represent the gamut of what the national parks bring to different people -- from unabashed thrills to solace, healing and the source of their livelihoods.

"I really wanted this film to be much more than a tour," says Greg MacGillivray, "and to invite audiences to engage with the parks in a fun and immersive way. I wanted to make a freewheeling film

that captures the way the parks speak to adventurers, artists, athletes, and anyone who wants to challenge themselves physically, artistically and spiritually within. This is what led me to think of Conrad Anker, who I've admired for decades and who is a terrific ambassador for the parks."

The concept of exploring the parks from a climber's perspective was inspiring to long-time MFF collaborator Stephen Judson, who serves as the writer of the film along with Tim Cahill, and also as an editor. "Every tourist who has ever stood in Yosemite Valley gazing up at Half Dome has had a fantasy of climbing that great wall of granite," points out Judson. "Maybe it was only a wishful flash of glory, gone in a nanosecond, crushed by the heavy hands of caution, responsibility, common sense and doubt. But however briefly, we've all been there. Our climbers in the film give wing to that flight of fantasy. The national parks inspire us to dream of breaking free of our everyday boundaries. The climbers take that yearning we all feel and complete the experience."

MacGillivray continues: "Conrad was the one who suggested that it would be perfect to involve Rachel and Max, not just because they climb and hike, but because both are artists inspired by the great outdoors. They each embody the idea that there is something in the parks for everyone."

Anker is the veteran of the group, renowned for pushing the vertical limits of human exploration in alpine expeditions that have taken him from Alaska to Everest. He has also drawn media attention for his moving personal history. In 1999, his long-time climbing partner Alex Lowe perished in a Tibetan avalanche while attempting to climb the 26,000-ft peak Shishapangma. Anker escaped with minor injuries but returned home devastated. There, while sharing intense mutual grief with Lowe's widow, Jennifer, the two slowly, unexpectedly fell in love. In 2001 they married and Anker adopted Lowe's three children. In the wake of tragedy and as they began a new chapter, the wilderness near their Montana home and across the country bolstered the family's fragile new bonds.

"What's amazing about Conrad," says director of photography and MFF mainstay Brad Ohlund, "is that he's a world-famous athlete but you couldn't meet a more unassuming person. He constantly took the initiative wherever we went, making friends with locals and rangers. You'd get so used to him being down-to-earth it was a shock to see him climb. His abilities are beyond awe-inspiring. One day he took a few of us climbing and he gracefully ran up a route we all struggled with for hours! You have no idea how hard what he's doing is because he makes it look so deceptively easy."

As a climber, Anker has been getting sustenance from the national parks his whole life, which is why he was thrilled to get MacGillivray's call. "Much of the best climbing in the U.S. is in national park sites," he notes, "so as climbers we really appreciate it and we feel an obligation to be stewards. I welcomed this opportunity to pay tribute to the national parks. It's been said the parks are America's

best idea and I'm confident in saying we have the best parks in the world. I think the wonderful message of this film is that the wonders of our parks are approachable by anyone."

Anker is especially excited to share his rarified POV on the parks – a climber's sky-high view. "When you're hanging from a cliff, up there with the birds, it's a whole different world. You feel very much part of nature, and because it's so challenging, you're living fully in the moment," he explains.

But he also wanted to give a nod to the next generation of explorers, climbers and citizens who will be the future custodians of the parks. So it felt natural to Anker to let youthful Rachel and Max take the lead on this giant-screen journey. "I think it's terrific to see a young woman and an artist become the main character of an outdoors film," Anker reflects. "I imagine a lot of young people will look up to Rachel. She is so enthusiastic and happy and she has a true love of nature that shines."

The filmmakers were equally enthralled by Pohl. "Like many good mentors, Conrad has a gift for stepping aside and letting younger folks shine -- and he did that for Rachel in this film," says Stephen Judson. "It's not so much that we chose Rachel as the main character. Rather, it's that, when we first saw the dailies, she simply jumped off the screen. She's a force of nature."

Like so many Americans, Pohl has both light-hearted and cherished childhood memories of discovering the parks. "Growing up in Montana, I've been going to Yellowstone for as long as I can remember – and climbing up boulders when my mom wasn't looking for just as long! I think my first distinct memory of a big trip to a national park is going to Utah's Canyonlands around age 5," she recalls. "Way back then, I had that red rock -- that utterly alien landscape – burned into my memory."

Pohl observes that these experiences helped shape who she has become. "Experiencing these otherworldly realms of beauty as a kid gave me a sense of limitless possibilities," she muses. "And I soon found I loved using my imagination to interact with nature, which led to me being an artist. I also learned that you can purge any bad feelings you might have just by going for a walk in nature."

For all the incredible things she's already done in her young life, Pohl says being part of **America Wild** was unlike anything else. She was already on a quest to visit all 400-plus park sites, but this moved her mission forward in a big way.

She also hopes her spirited climbing and biking ventures might spark other young people to head deeper into parks they visit. "I love the parks so much, I want others to go out and find their own amazing experiences," Pohl says. "I hope the message comes across that you don't have to do anything quite as bold as we do to find joy in the parks. There are so many different parks and different ways to have fun. I still have so much more to explore!"

Having grown up with two different celebrated climbers as fathers, Max Lowe was exploring the high and the wild before he could even walk. But as an adult, he has taken off in a distinctively personal direction, becoming an accomplished outdoor photographer, writer and filmmaker. The recipient of a National Geographic Young Explorers Grant, Lowe headed to Nepal to document the lives of Sherpas, entering the mountains that have long called to his family in his own way.

His memories of the U.S. national parks are like memories of home, and helped to etch his persona. “I actually lived in Grand Teton National Park – in what they call the Climber’s Camp,” he explains. “I was lucky to have this very wild, idyllic childhood that a lot of kids just don’t get anymore. I would be running around exploring while my dad was off climbing and my mom was painting. It was a great gift; I was brought up to be independent, to explore and to pursue what I loved.”

When Conrad Anker joined their family, climbing became a way of building trust and a beyond-words connection. “My father never pressured me to climb or to go beyond doing what I felt comfortable with – but being in the mountains was a great way for us to spend time together,” he observes. “I was always drawn to exploring the amazing places my parents introduced to me to – but I didn’t spark to becoming a professional climber. I found my own path as a photographer.”

As soon as Lowe heard about *America Wild*, he knew he wanted to take part. “I’m excited to share my personal connection with the parks,” he says. “And because I love film and imagery and storytelling, it feels like a natural extension of everything I’ve been about all my life. IMAX is such an amazingly rich visual experience, it’s the perfect way to celebrate the importance of these largely untouched places that belong to us all.”

Most of all, Lowe hopes audiences will get a taste of what the wilderness has brought to him, even in times of tumult. “So many people today grow up in lit-up cities, where you can never even see the stars in the night sky. But I think it’s vital to humanity to see places that are so big and wild that we can hardly fathom them. I think humankind thrives on knowing wild places,” he comments.

Though this was their initiation into MFF filmmaking, Anker, Pohl and Lowe were gratified to find it was like collaborating with old friends. Though Anker has worked on numerous film productions, including the recent *Meru*, he says this one had a different feel. “Greg creates a family atmosphere where everyone is chipping in and everyone’s ideas are valued. You can see why his team is so dedicated to him,” Anker says. “He’s a talented filmmaker but he’s also one of the nicest guys I’ve worked with and life is too short to be with people who are rude or grumpy or uninspired.”

3 DAYS IN YOSEMITE: THE CAMPING TRIP THAT CHANGED THE NATION

For Greg MacGillivray, the major storytelling challenge in *America Wild* was how to highlight the vital history of how the National Park System was first created – while never losing the exhilaration of exploring the parks in the here and now. “The key was finding that tricky balance between bringing audiences on high-energy adventures with Conrad, Rachel and Max, while also telling the rich story of how the parks were protected in the first place,” says the director. “We might not have had any wilderness left to explore, because things were heading in that direction.”

The full story of the creation of the National Park Service amid intense political battles is a huge topic that can, and has, spanned volumes. But MacGillivray captures the essence of it via perhaps the most famed, and most unusual, camping trip in U.S. history: naturalist John Muir’s 3-day escapade roughing it with U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt through Yosemite Valley in 1903.

It was a moment of precipitous change. In the 19th Century, many Americans perceived the country’s vast swaths of wilderness as seething, dangerous realms – places that should be tapped for their rich economic resources but ultimately tamed out of existence. But by the turn of the century, attitudes were shifting. Artists and writers were bringing new views of the natural world into cultural vogue – and more and more people found themselves turning to the great outdoors as a respite from a new age of encroaching technology. At the same time, Americans were becoming more aware that wild lands were being stripped of the nation’s most spectacular animals, trees and rivers. Worried about losing a sublime part of the American character, the battle for public lands turned political.

At that time, there were only a few moderately protected wildernesses in the U.S. In 1832, Congress had approved Hot Springs National Park in Arkansas as the first nationally protected land reservation. In 1872, Ulysses S. Grant signed the Act that made Yellowstone the first official national park. But there was no central mechanism to create, protect and manage national parks in perpetuity.

That might have remained the case if it were not for Muir, one of the most vocal, poetic and effective advocates for preserving wild places. A character unto himself, Muir had been born in Scotland but grew up in Wisconsin before heading West as a fledgling writer and glaciologist, where he fell madly in love with Yosemite. He wrote of the stirring emotions he felt there: “It was like lying in a great solemn cathedral, far vaster and more beautiful than any built by the hand of man.”

He argued that it would be an incalculable loss if these “temples of nature” were to be hunted, logged and mined into oblivion. Muir – not to mention Yosemite – convinced Roosevelt. Already a devoted conservationist, the President returned to Washington fired up to argue that America’s wild assets must belong to the public and must be staunchly preserved by the laws of the land.

Following in these historic footsteps, the MFF team shot at Mariposa Grove, where Roosevelt and Muir camped on their first night together (and where the President was given a towering bundle of 40 blankets to assure his warmth!) “It was amazing to recreate the very moment when these two towering American figures sat together and determined what the National Park Service would be,” says Greg MacGillivray. “They realized that much as Europeans protect their cathedrals and castles, Americans must protect the wildernesses that serve as our Notre Dames.”

Portraying the two legends are a pair of actors who know these men through-and-through: Joe Weigand, who travels around the country portraying Roosevelt in a one-man show, and Lee Stetson, who has portrayed Muir in numerous films including Ken Burns’ national parks TV documentary.

“To watch these guys in action was transporting,” says Brad Ohlund. “They were never *not* in character and that inspired us to really try to recreate the atmosphere as it must have been in 1903.”

Writer Stephen Judson notes that twining historical re-creations into the middle of an in-the-moment adventure can be risky. “Greg’s decision to film Teddy and John Muir on 1570mm film was bold because re-creations, when they don’t work, can be perceived as cheesy. But this is the key moment in the birth of the national parks, so it was essential. If we had told the story without letting the audience see this moment in Yosemite, there would have been a hole in the heart of the film. To avoid the contrived look that plagues some historical re-creations, Greg kept the shots fairly wide, to emphasize how the massive scale of the trees dwarfs our characters, so the scene becomes less about the men themselves, and more about their relationship to Yosemite Valley.”

For producer Shaun MacGillivray, the moment brought him back to his own early introduction to national parks. “I always remember the first time I saw Yosemite Valley and Half Dome as a kid,” he muses. “So it was really special to be taking this trip back in time there. With these two wonderful performances, it felt like history was unfolding before our eyes.”

Following that breakthrough moment, Muir got more than he imagined. Not only did Roosevelt resolve to protect Yosemite – he would go on to sign into existence five more national parks, 18 national monuments, 55 national bird sanctuaries and wildlife refuges and 150 national forests.

Roosevelt also enacted The Antiquities Act, a precursor to the park service, which obligated federal agencies to preserve “scientifically, culturally and historically valuable sites,” and authorized the President to designate National Monuments. In doing so, Roosevelt told the people: “We are not building this country for a day. It is to last through the ages.”

A system that could truly last the ages became full reality in 1916 when President Woodrow Wilson signed The Organic Act. The Act established a brand new government agency, the National Park

Service, mandated “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein ... by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

For Conrad Anker, no film about the national parks could ever be complete without a tip of the hat to Muir. “He was an inspiration to all who love the American wilderness,” Anker observes. “He was a man ahead of his time who had a deep vision and his willingness to speak passionately and honestly with Teddy Roosevelt became a key to preserving the parks for the future.”

Judson notes that Muir continues to influence how we value the relationship between nature and our own humanity. “Muir celebrated the living spirit that he felt in every rock and leaf and blade of grass. Being in nature almost always refreshes us, but some spots go far beyond that; they fill us with a sense of awe, wondering how anything so sublime could exist here on Earth. That profound spiritual connection is the gift the national parks keep giving us, visit after visit. That’s what John Muir fought so hard to preserve,” he summarizes.

As filming wrapped in Yosemite, Ohlund and a team of four continued eastward on their own rag-tag, family-style road trip – but one with a major mission: to see how many parks they could shoot in three weeks. “It was infectious, going from park to park to park,” recalls Ohlund. “It was an industrial-strength road trip with non-stop adventure and excitement.”

The team soon found themselves roaming the primeval landscape of Yellowstone, with its gushing geysers and alien-like thermal basins encircled by lofty alpine peaks. But this was no ordinary park hike as they roamed with 2 carts jam-packed with hundreds of pounds of camera equipment.

Because most geyser activity, outside the aptly named Old Faithful, cannot be accurately predicted, there was a lot of chasing and waiting. But throughout, the one constant was attracting crowds. “We felt like the pied pipers,” Ohlund laughs. “Everywhere we went, people followed. We had whole busloads of tourists surrounding us at times, waiting their turn to look through the camera lens. But it was so much fun and we saw it as our chance to be not just ambassadors for the film, but also a bit like ambassadors for the parks in the tradition of Muir.”

DANCING WITH DEVILS TOWER

America Wild’s itinerary set out to not only visit such legendary post-card landscapes as Yosemite and Yellowstone, but also to uncover some of America’s least seen jewels. These include the dramatically named Devils Tower National Monument, home to one of the most surreal marvels in America -- the 1,267-foot (equivalent to 86 stories), improbably steep dome of igneous rock that erupts from the Black Hills of Wyoming.

A draw for rock climbers, this one-of-a-kind volcanic wonder that rises dramatically up out of a vast prairie has long been held sacred by local Native American tribes (who call it “Bear Lodge,” “Bear Mountain” or “Tree Rock,” among other names) and is also noted for its starring appearance in the sci-fi classic “Close Encounters of the Third Kind.” Having struck everyone who encountered it with awe, it was originally designated a National Monument by Theodore Roosevelt way back in 1906.

Conrad was one of the first on the production to recognize this place as one “that has a real power to it, because you’re surrounded by sacred Native American history.” Conrad and others on the production team met with National Park Service staff and more than 20 tribal elders and leaders to discuss the production. Out of respect for the tribes, the production did not conduct aerial cinematography near the Tower, nor climb to its peak. And as with all of its productions, MacGillivray Freeman left the site with no trace of its presence there.

“The thing I wanted to share about Devils Tower is that it looks like it could never be an act of nature,” muses Greg MacGillivray. “You could imagine a clever architect designing it, you could imagine it being carved by a machine, but it seems *almost* impossible that a natural volcanic intrusion arose with those perfect 90-degree angles. It fills you with a reverence for what nature can do.”

The formation’s rare collection of massive, parallel cracks have made Devils Tower a major destination on many hardcore climbers’ bucket lists. The singular rock boasts hundreds of established climbing routes – ranging from the doable for amateur climbers to the desperate for even the pros.

“You can’t appreciate just how massive some of those cracks are until you get close up and then you realize just how tough this formation is to climb. It requires a kind of spider-like action that’s really exciting,” says Shaun MacGillivray. “But of course Conrad went right up it as if it was nothing.”

For the film, Conrad chose a route colorfully named El Matador. It was first climbed in 1967 and today is considered a difficult (rated 10d) but rewarding classic. “It’s a crack that you stem your legs up – so it’s very interesting visually,” Anker comments. “It’s one of the most continuously challenging routes at Devils Tower and the nature of the crack is that you’re using all the features on it.”

Crack-climbing is a more physically dramatic art form than face-climbing – with climbers using their body parts as levers, jamming hands and feet at jig-saw tilts into the fissures until cliff, skin and bone meld together. It makes for exciting visual action – but took Rachel Pohl to her physical edge.

“It was exciting to capture Rachel really pressing herself to achieve this climb on Devils Tower,” says MacGillivray. “It’s something most people will never experience, hanging off a sheer rock face hundreds of feet in the air, but it’s a wonderful way to see how special this place is.”

Pohl says she welcomed the intense challenge, but the wintry conditions made a daunting assignment even tougher. “That climb would still have been hard if I could have felt my hands, but not only were my legs maxed out ... my fingers were completely numb! It really spoke to the theme of endurance,” she laughs. “It’s the kind of climbing where you leave nothing behind.”

Climbing Devils Tower is one thing – but filming climbing on Devils Tower is even more challenging, especially when you bring traditional film-based IMAX cameras into the mix.

“The biggest difficulty was just getting the camera up high on the formation,” acknowledges Greg MacGillivray. “Luckily, we were able to bring aboard Michael Brown, a terrific climber and cinematographer who worked with us on *Alps* and is working with us on our new *Everest* film. He did some phenomenal rigging that allowed us to get the shots we wanted.”

Brown wrapped the fragile IMAX camera in foam and then hauled the heavy beast clipped to his harness, attaching it to the sedimentary rock of Devils Tower via an innovative variation on a tripod the MFF crew has dubbed a “wall-pod.” “It was far from the easiest way to get the camera up on the cliff ... but it was the best way,” quips Brad Ohlund. Adds Shaun MacGillivray. “It was the will, passion and expertise of our climbing photography team that made this precarious shoot possible.”

The crew constantly raced the weather. “You might have sunshine in the morning but then you might have dangerous lightning or even snow in the afternoon. For us, that meant working fast,” says Greg. “But for the climbers, it meant they often had to wait for the right conditions.”

Recalls Max Lowe: “The clouds would roll in and we’d sit on a ledge waiting and waiting for the right light. I remember staring into the stunning black hills hoping to be able to move soon!”

Yet the rigors of Devils Tower also brought cast and crew closer. “A wonderful camaraderie developed,” says Greg. “We made bonds that lasted the whole shoot.”

That kind of camaraderie is something often heightened in trips to national parks, which have brought friends, families and even strangers together. There’s something unique about connections forged in the pure, primal air of the outdoors, says Pohl. “There are so many superficial ways of getting to know people these days –on your iPhone or Instagram -- but when you’re outside with a friend even if you’re not talking, you know your friend is having the same thoughts about how incredible it is. The unspoken moments create a kinship difficult to find in other ways,” she observes.

Adds Lowe: “Our regular, daily lives can be very predictable. But when you’re outside there are many unknowns so you really come to depend on the people you’re with. It’s been really cool exploring wild places with my dad, for example, because it’s a rare situation where you’re *both* learning and sharing in this really powerful knowledge. That’s not something you get indoors often.”

RIPPING THROUGH MOAB'S MOUNTAIN BIKE MECCA

While most people instantly associate national parks with hiking – you'll also find the parks full of motorists, horse packers, sledders, rafters and hang-gliders, to list merely a few of the alternative views. One of the most exhilarating ways to explore the area outside of Utah's Arches and Canyonland National Parks is mountain biking the Slickrock Trail of Moab. *America Wild* zips into some teeth-rattling action as pro mountain bikers join Conrad, Rachel and Max to traverse the tire-gripping, sandstone seabeds with gravity-defying abandon.

The Slickrock Trail is not just for experts; it draws more than 100,000 cyclists of all levels each year with a 13-mile loop that invites bikers to follow the flowing contours of the canyon in their own style. Of course for pro mountain biker and Moab local Eric Porter that style is no-holds-barred.

"What Eric does ... I've never seen anyone do things in person before that looked that scary," attests Greg MacGillivray. "He's really at the top of the mountain biking world. But amazingly, he's so used to tucking and rolling, he just walks away from the most incredible-looking falls."

Riding with Porter was a special thrill for Rachel and Max, both budding mountain bikers. "I was a bit intimidated when I heard Eric was going to be riding with us," Pohl admits, "but he was very cool and an example of someone like Conrad who's a pro athlete but also an incredible human being. The ride was amazing. I'm used to a trail but this was like being in a giant natural playground."

Lowe notes that there's something indescribable about watching extreme beauty fly by from the seat of a bike. "It's a very unique and refreshing outdoor experience. You can cover so much more ground than you could on foot and you see things in a whole new way," he muses.

MacGillivray wanted to shoot the swoops and swerves of Moab with a visceral realism – to give audiences that churning rush bikers get -- so he turned to his long-time colleague and master of aerial photography Ron Goodman. The designer of the groundbreaking, gyroscopically-stabilized SpaceCam helicopter mounts, Goodman is renowned for taking choppers where choppers don't usually go, and for capturing bird's-eye panoramas that terrestrial cameramen might never imagine.

MacGillivray relished working with him on this film. "Ron and I have worked together so much that we kind of have a secret short-hand," observes the director. "He knew exactly what I wanted on this shoot and we accomplished some spectacular helicopter work all on one sunny morning."

The next day, the crew returned to get unmanned drone and ground-based shots to add to the mix. However, that day presented a new obstacle: 30 mph winds. "Wind just meant we had to really up our efforts at coordination. We stationed someone up on a bluff to detect the exact moment when

the wind was dying and then we'd jump into action and start shooting before it kicked up again. It took many tries to get it right," recalls Greg, "but when we did it was spectacular."

Later, it all became a work of balletic choreography in the editing room. "I love the way that sequence was cut because as an audience member, you feel you're on the edge the whole time. There's such a strong emotional level to it," sums up Shaun MacGillivray.

OVER ARCHES: SOARING UP THE THREE PENGUINS

A more whimsical climbing adventure lay in store for the team in Arches National Park, home to the world's largest collection of natural sandstone archways. At the very entrance to the park stands a quirky stone guardian: The Three Penguins, a trio of sculpture-like 130-foot towers that sit imposingly atop a 100-foot pedestal. The view from below them can only be beaten by the view from on top: a cocktail-table-sized summit with jaw-dropping, 360-degree vistas of the entire park.

"Arches might be my favorite park of all because it's so different from anywhere I've seen," says Shaun MacGillivray. "It's hard to wrap your mind around the idea that this amazing architecture is nature's doing and something that happened over geologic time. We not only shot our characters climbing and hiking, but we also sent in time-lapse photography teams to capture the park's shifting moods. We really wanted audiences to experience the living, breathing nature of the place."

As soon as the filmmaking team saw the Three Penguins, the funky rock form could not be ignored. "It made so much sense to shoot there," says Shaun. "When you step back, that rock really does kind of look like a group of penguins, but we also saw the potential for spectacular aerials."

To capture the outsized scope, MFF once again turned to the aerial magic of Ron Goodman and the SpaceCam, who sought out the most inventive ways to take audiences right into the grip of a climber's feeling of total exposure. "The helicopter gives you a rare perspective on our climbers and then, just when our threesome gets to the top of the Penguins, it pulls back for a view that truly shows how breathtakingly expansive Arches is. It's goose-bumps kind of stuff," says Shaun MacGillivray.

For Rachel Pohl, the Three Penguins went right into her list of top ten experiences on the trip, for several reasons: "I've always been totally obsessed with penguins – in fact as a kid, I thought I'd one day become a penguin scientist," she explains. "As far as the climbing goes, it's super interesting because the formation is made of eroding sandstone formed by the wind and the rain but also all those who have been up it before. The weird part was climbing with a helicopter next to you! I tried not to be distracted, but it's hard to block out a helicopter. And usually, you get the amazing feeling of reaching

the summit only once on a climb but I climbed that part 12 times for the film so I had it over and over! Watching the sun rise from up there felt like something from a dream.”

Adds Max Lowe: “It one of those views that is like no other -- you feel like you’re peeking over the tops of all the arches. Even though we were surrounded by cameras and a helicopter, nothing could obscure the wonder.”

ICE CAPADES: THE WINTER WONDERLAND OF PICTURED ROCKS

The imagery of *America Wild* turns to mystical enchantment in the film’s most unexpected location: the frozen wonderland of Pictured Rocks National Seashore in upper Michigan. Designated a national park site in 1966, the park is the very definition of a hidden gem, boasting sandstone cliffs, caves, natural archways and dunes that draw local visitors but are not often seen in winter, let alone on film. Indeed, the MFF team only discovered it by accident.

Originally slated to shoot winter scenes in Yellowstone, the crew was thwarted when Yellowstone had a record year of paltry snowfall and warmer-than-usual temperatures. But when MFF production assistant Becky Jameson brought photos of Pictured Rocks to an emergency meeting, the wintertime plan shifted. “As soon as we saw it, we jumped into action,” recalls Greg MacGillivray.

The reality was even more breathtaking than anything they could have anticipated. Says Shaun MacGillivray: “We’d never seen a place that looked so much like a fantasy land – where you have caves filled with ice crystals and icy waterfalls that are so pristine. It’s a real hidden gem and it was a chance for us to explore the wild in winter. It was even a new experience for Conrad, Rachel and Max and we found the place had a tremendous emotional resonance.”

Two different sequences were shot in Pictured Rocks: an ice-climb up a frozen waterfall led by Conrad Anker and a trek into a hidden ice cave that appears like something out of a classic fairy tale. The ice climb presented numerous challenges for the filmmakers – including just getting the equipment there. “The lake was not completely frozen so we faced having to hike equipment in and out for hours each day. But we got lucky – a cold spell hit, the lake soon froze over and suddenly we could travel by snowmobile,” Greg MacGillivray explains. “Of course, you can’t take a frozen lake for granted. You have to constantly be on the lookout for mushy spots, or you’ll start to sink!”

Then there was the fact that mechanical equipment fails at ultra-low temperatures. “The IMAX® 3D camera really doesn’t like cold,” admits Greg. “So we used electric heating pads velcroed around the camera like blankets. But even that wasn’t enough. The camera would still jam. So then we put the camera inside a special tent with a propane heater, while the rest of us froze outside. Meanwhile, we

were shooting additional footage with the 2D camera. We bought the last 150 feet of Estar film stock on earth – it’s a plastic-based film that stays supple in the cold – and that saved us.”

Each shot meant hours in bone-chilling cold. At times, the crew had to haul in large fans just to keep snowflakes from hitting the camera lens. “Nothing works better in IMAX 3D than snow, but it can’t hit the lens or the shot is ruined,” explains Greg. “It was a very difficult shoot – I had numbness that lasted in my feet for 4 months after – but it was so incredible we couldn’t resist.”

Anker, Pohl and Lowe had never seen Pictured Rocks before either and loved discovering a complete unknown. “This was my first time there and it is astonishingly beautiful,” says Anker. “It offers a nice chance to show some of the beauty of the American Midwest.” Adds Pohl: “When I heard we were going to Michigan, I thought ‘where?’ But it turned out to be a big favorite.”

As the others were ice climbing, Pohl and film research director Barbara MacGillivray were hiking – and came upon a glittering ice cave that Greg calls “a pinnacle moment in the film.” Says Rachel: “What I love so much about that cave is that it is always changing so you could go back in a year and it will might look different. It’s so cool that we saw it in one indescribably beautiful moment that will never be again.”

When Greg saw the cave, he too was overcome. “It is truly magical,” he describes. “I’ve seen other ice caves but I’ve never seen icicles like this – some were mysteriously covered in powdered snow, other were so impossibly thin you couldn’t imagine how they were formed. And the only footsteps in the cave were ours, which made it even more magical. It’s one of the best 3D locations I’ve ever encountered – and later we knew we had to set that scene to Jeff Buckley’s ‘Hallelujah.’”

HOW TO FIND A BEAR IN ALASKA: KATMAI NATIONAL PARK

Many of America’s most remote national parks are found in the northern reaches of the Alaskan outback -- but for those who endeavor to get there, the prize can be priceless. At least that was the theory when Brad Ohlund headed by floatplane to Katmai National Park, an active volcanic landscape famed for some of the best bear viewing in the world – that is when the bears show up. Each year, grizzly bears typically arrive in great, lumbering numbers to sate their bear-sized appetites as salmon flood the Brooks River. With an estimated 2,200 bears inhabiting the park, visitors can luck upon unparalleled views of these fascinating creatures in a sanctuary-like setting.

But when Ohlund and his small team arrived in Katmai, and pitched their tent in Brooks Camp, there was just one problem: no bears yet. The bears show up on their own schedule so there was no choice but to wait patiently in the cold and the damp. Fortunately, patience did indeed become virtue.

“We were getting a bit concerned at the mounting cost of our trip, and I was also getting a head cold, when suddenly, we got our first shot of a bear catching a fish,” recalls Ohlund. “From there it just got better and better. Suddenly, there were literally bears everywhere you looked.”

Befitting the MO of *America Wild*, the mission was to capture the bears in innovative visuals that would take audiences more fully into the moment. “The first thing that Greg told me was he wanted to see the bears in slow-mo,” recalls Ohlund. “But that’s not an easy thing, technically, because the camera we would normally use for that is a monster and wouldn’t have been possible to use in such a remote location.”

Ironically, it takes very high-speed, or high frame-rate, cameras to provide the kind of slow-mo that can offer gloriously subtle details in animal behavior. After considerable research, Ohlund opted to use the agile Phantom Flex 4K digital camera from Vision Research, a pioneer in slow-mo photography. “That camera can shoot 970 frames per second at 4K raw,” he says, “which gave more than we need to get extreme slow-motion. Our origins at MFF lie in surf films and making those, we learned that every subject has a frame-rate where the magic happens. With the bears it turned about to be about 200-300 frames per second – slow enough to really see their movement and expressions in detail but fast enough to keep your attention rapt.”

Joining Ohlund in Katmai was Mark Emory, a gator wrangler he’d met on *Hurricane On The Bayou* – who turned out to spend the *other* half of the year in the north, with a home right outside Katmai. With his rich local knowledge, Emory played a key role – including re-routing tourists. “One of our biggest problems once the bears arrived was that we had hundreds of people on a Park Service platform where we could get our best shots -- and if a single person moved it bounced the camera! So Mark scouted out alternative places for great still photographs and led people there. It worked out for us, but he also turned out to be another great ambassador and people got the shots they wanted.”

Throughout Ohlund says local park rangers were also tremendously helpful. “Wherever we went on this film, we found that all the rangers were very supportive of the film and really let us push the envelope,” he says. “We were able to get right up to the edges.”

A few close calls, however, reminded Ohlund of just how essential it is to respect an intelligent predator who can overpower you in seconds, camera or not. “We had one 600-pound bear approach us thinking we might be a good lunch and, even though we’ve done a lot of wildlife shoots, a 600-pound bear gives one pause!” Ohlund confesses. “He started coming right at us. I’d heard a rumor that if you break tree branches it will discourage a bear because they think another bear might be coming through the trees. And luckily in this case that worked!”

At one point, a pair of bears ran past so close to Ohlund he was nearly tickled by their fur on his skin, and in yet another heart-pounding encounter, Ohlund ran into a bear on the beach and got some totally unplanned shots. Yet, Ohlund also notes that with rangers constantly emphasizing bear safety – for the bears’ sake as well as for the human visitors – mishaps are a rarity.

“It’s pretty amazing that for the most part they have had no problems between bears and people on Katmai,” he says. “It’s one of the most fascinating places I’ve been.”

When Ohlund returned with his hard-won bear footage, one particular story charmed everyone: that of an immature bear learning to catch salmon with all the endearing frustrations of an awkward youngster. “I think the most satisfying moment in the film is when that hungry bear finally manages to figure it out,” muses Stephen Judson. “The suspense kills me!”

CALIFORNIA GIANTS & FLORIDA TRIUMPHS: REDWOODS & EVERGLADES

A very different living organism is explored as *America Wild* heads to Redwood National Park in California: home to some of the tallest, widest and oldest trees on earth. The MFF team was thrilled to bring IMAX photography to the “Emerald Giant,” a massive tree more than 300-feet tall currently being studied by world-renowned married botanists Steve Sillett and Marie Antoine of Humboldt State University, who regularly spend their days suspended in the arboreal canopy.

“To shoot the Emerald Giant, we built a wire dolly – the NFL regularly uses them now but we’ve actually been doing it for more than 20 years,” notes Greg MacGillivray. “We worked on that shot for three days and it was an amazing time for us amid the peacefulness and majesty of the forest. When you see how devoted these scientists are to the trees and all the life in them it just really gets exciting. I’m very moved by the idea that the trees have as much to give us as we have to give them -- they’ve endured for so long and we’re just beginning to eke out an understanding of them.”

Adds Shaun MacGillivray: “I find the sequence in Redwood National Park is one of the most spiritual parts of the film. We look at the trees from a science perspective, at all they have to teach us, but we also had a chance to reveal the pure awe they strike you with in aials no one has ever seen.”

Greg sees the trees as a symbol of why the National Park Service is so important to the American future. “It fills you with hope to see these ancient trees, which host animals science is only just discovering, thriving in sanctuaries, knowing they will be protected for another thousand years. There was a time when redwoods were nearly destroyed in humanity’s zeal to build, but now we understand so much more.”

Another spectacular part of America that was nearly lost lies on the opposite coast: Florida's Everglades. Once dubbed the "Sea of Grass" by Native Americans, today it is the largest mangrove ecosystem in the Western Hemisphere -- renown for mystery-laden waterways where people can savor more than 700 plant and 300 bird species, as well as endangered manatees, crocodiles and panthers. But that wasn't always the case. In the 19th Century, when the Everglades were written off as an inhospitable swampland, the area's shorebirds, and with them a whole fragile ecosystem, were nearly wiped out. The Everglades flourish today only because of the concerted efforts of early 20th Century conservationists and the establishment of a national park in 1947.

"The Everglades form one of the film's most beautiful and important sequences," says Shaun MacGillivray. "It's a very special place in our nation -- one of the most unique, complex, intertwined ecosystems we have. It's a great place to highlight the success story of protecting America's wildest places and another glimpse into how many remarkably different kinds of parks you can experience."

ART IN THE PARKS

As *America Wild* unfolds, wild adventures and artistic expression increasingly entwine -- reflecting the teeming cultural vitality of the parks. From the beginning, art was as important to the parks as the parks were important to the arts. Indeed, it was the 19th Century American landscape painters who, long before the days of film, gave ordinary people a glimpse into the magic of wild places, and helped spur the public call for a permanent National Park System.

Today, that spirit is kept alive by dozens of artists-in-residence programs throughout the National Park System -- and by numberless painters, writers and musicians for whom nature's primal rhythms, shapes, palettes, stories and emotions are the stuff of creative manna.

"Back in the 1860s, when there was a huge battle over whether Americans should protect our great wildernesses or exploit them for resources, it was the painters who really swayed hearts because they demonstrated not just the beauty and serenity but the spiritual sustenance of these places. Artists were instrumental in creating the parks, and they remain an important part of them," says Greg MacGillivray. "Artists of all kinds continue to reveal nature to us in new ways."

America Wild joins the tapestry of art and nature in its own way. Comments Stephen Judson: "Many artists have drawn inspiration from the parks, and created artworks that reveal unseen dimensions of natural places. A few great artists, like Albert Bierstadt and Ansel Adams, have created huge images of the parks on giant canvases or prints -- as if only an enormous work of art could convey their overwhelming scale. I see this film as a continuation of that impulse. Epic imagery is a hallmark of

MFF films. *America Wild* achieves the goal of every great giant screen classic – to transport people to an unforgettable place and persuade them to fall in love with it.”

For Rachel Pohl, nature is a constant muse. She notes that, although it’s just a hobby, climbing has deeply influenced her swirling, stirring landscape paintings. “One theme that appears again and again in my work are these rolling clouds and low blankets of inversion clouds – it’s a kind of metaphor for being up above it all, rising above the ordinary,” she says.

Rachel especially loves the contrasts between high-adrenaline pursuits and painting. “The outdoors stuff I do is fast and dynamic, yet painting is slow and reflective. When I’m doing something physically challenging, I’m often thinking about painting, which gives me calm. But when I’m painting, I’m always trying to capture the excitement and movement of being outdoors,” relates Pohl.

As a photographer and writer, Max Lowe also feels a deep link between nature and the urge to create. He says: “Artists interpreting the national parks in a romantic way helped people see them as far more than just as resources to be used. It’s cool to be someone continuing that legacy today.”

AN ADVENTUROUS MIX: THE SOUNDTRACK

Amid the film’s ravishing, interactive visuals, *America Wild* rocks out to a soundtrack of popular songs as diverse as the parks themselves – from iconic rock classics to climbing-the-charts hits. As soon as he began assembling the film, Greg MacGillivray had an inkling that the instant effervescent joy of pop songs was the right sound for this family quest into the wonders of the wild. But to pull off this new sonic approach, he turned to the composer who has been creating soulful, award-winning scores for MFF films throughout its history: Steve Wood.

For Wood it was a different way of working, but he says that the songs in the film were chosen for one reason: “This film is a celebration and the music throughout brings that celebratory feel.”

He continues: “The national parks are the places we go to rekindle our spirits – so the soundtrack is also aimed at lifting the spirit. The idea was ‘let’s make this a fun movie.’ It’s designed to give families a joyful experience of what it’s like to get out there and explore. It really fits in with Greg’s philosophy that if you let people fall in love with wild places, they will naturally protect them.”

The songs include both Bruce Springsteen and Little Feat performing perhaps the most famous American pop tune of all: Woody Guthrie’s folk ode to the American spirit, “This Land Is Your Land.” Another song is Jeff Buckley’s version of Leonard Cohen’s rock hymn “Hallelujah” which adds to the hush of Rachel’s adventure in the ice caves of Pictured Rocks National Seashore. The songs range from Mungo Jerry’s instantly recognizable “In The Summertime” to alternative Aussie rocker Scott Matthew’s

cover of John Denver’s “Annie’s Song” and to new music from rising British star James Bay (“Hold Back The River”), singer-songwriter Andy Grammer (“Back Home”), tropical-influenced band Vacationer (“The Wild Life”), award-winning folk rockers The Lumineers (“Flowers In Your Hair”), popular crooner Jason Mraz (“Back To The Earth” and alternative country singer Brandi Carlile (“Wherever Your Heart Is.”)

Wood says his own musical connections to wilderness are complex and could be expressed in myriad musical forms but he is always eager to try new creative approaches with MacGillivray. “Greg has an extraordinary vision of the positive side of life and that’s why we’ve resonated together all these years,” he says. “With this film, he really wanted there to be a light, buoyant feeling and an appeal to audiences of all backgrounds and ages.”

Like so many involved with the film, Wood has his own treasured national park memories. “My first park trip was to the Grand Canyon at 8 years old,” he recalls. “I grew up in a beach-going California family, so I very strongly remember that as the very first time I saw snow and even an icicle. It was one of those experiences when you realize there’s a lot more to life than what you expected and it’s something I’ve always carried with me.”

As Wood finalized the soundtrack, Stephen Judson and editors Mark Fletcher and Jason Paul were assembling the masses of footage – a huge undertaking. “Weaving together disparate story threads is often a challenge. Early on in the editing, we always try to figure it out logically, and that never quite works,” reflects Judson. “At a certain point in editing a movie, you have to accept the limitations of the footage and embrace the strengths. That’s when things really start to flow. At first glance, it might seem that our trio of intrepid climbers is at odds with the historical roots of the national parks. But they’re really not. They’re simply a 21st century outgrowth of those roots.”

THE LAST IMAX FEATURE ON FILM?

America Wild not only marks the 100th birthday of the National Park Service. It also marks a bittersweet milestone for large-screen features – as one of the last of its kind to be fully shot on 70mm celluloid, rather than digitally. For Greg MacGillivray, it was fitting to make a film about preservation on the longest-lasting recording medium humans have yet known.

“Going into this, we knew that this would be one of, if not *the* last, film-based giant-screen motion picture. We’re on the cusp of a full conversion over to digital,” he explains. “But it’s exciting to think that we’ve created a kind of time capsule of this moment in the parks’ history in a way that is indelible. Centuries from now, when it’s the 200th or 300th birthday of the national parks, these images

will still be around. So I'm pretty proud that we spent the time and money and effort to get these giant cameras into these amazing places."

Concludes Brad Ohlund: "Parts of this film are like visual poetry. I think this is among the most beautiful things we've ever done. It's impossible not to be awed by each of these landscapes."

THE NEXT 100 YEARS

As the National Park Service looks ahead to the next century of protecting U.S. treasures, it will pursue new directions in education, preservation and sustainability as well as seek new ways to connect the parks to communities throughout the nation and the world.

Greg MacGillivray says that drawing people who have maybe never visited the parks before is a goal that unites the National Park Service and this film.

"Sharing the park with people from all backgrounds is a really important thing," he points out. "Not everyone has the luxury of time and travel, so we're thrilled to be able to give parents and kids a chance to experience more of the majesty of the world. I think people will be blown away by all the park system offers and hopefully some will have the opportunity to take their own journeys."

Shaun MacGillivray agrees. "I think one of the most important things for the future is simply building a deeper awareness for how important the parks are. Today we are tied to phones and the media and everyday city life perhaps even more than ever – but once you get out there in a park, you realize how much it can enhance and affect your life. Even for a filmmaker, you start to forget how powerful that effect is until you're there. I think it's something we need in our souls – and that awareness will drive us to continue to protect and manage the parks in a way that will change with the times and endure. I think humankind will realize more and more that as John Muir says we need places 'to pray in and play in.'"

The National Park System is certainly not idly waiting for the future – they have numerous initiatives in motion intended to keep the parks healthy, vital and more diverse. "The National Park Foundation is a charity funded by Congress to attract young and minority visitors," explains Stephen Judson. "They provide transportation for 100,000 students to visit the national parks every year. The African American Experience Fund is preserving African American history in national parks, while the American Latino Heritage Fund does the same for Latino history."

No matter who you are, if you've been to a national park you've probably bagged your own slew of fun photos, entertaining stories and meaningful personal memories. That side of the parks – the side

that romances society one family at a time – is captured in the joyful final moments of *America Wild*, which features actual home movies collected by the MFF team via a call sent out over the internet.

“We connect with the parks through family and friends, as larger-than-life playgrounds. Long after we share a quiet sunset or a swim in a crystal clear stream, those moments live on in the family memory bank, enhanced by the afterglow of the parks themselves,” observes Stephen Judson. “The sound of laughter echoing through the campsite stays with you long after you pack up your tent and go home. Millions of families share similar memories. “

Greg MacGillivray acknowledges that one film cannot possibly encompass all that the parks offer on tap for those who are able and driven to seek them out. But he hopes this film reveals something essential about the national parks story: that it’s a tale of human triumph for all of us.

25 AMAZING FACTS & FIGURES FROM AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS

- #1. The National Park Service turns 100 years old on August 25, 2016
- #2. There are 408 national park sites, including monuments, seashores, lakeshores, recreation areas and historic sites, protected across the U.S. – totaling a whopping 84 million acres, the size of the entire country of Germany
- #3. The National Park System literally ranges from A to Z ... from Abraham Lincoln Birthplace Park in Kentucky to Zion National Park in Utah
- #4. Last year, a record 292.8 million people visited park sites and the number keeps rising. Since the park system began, they've drawn an estimated 12 billion visitors
- #5. The National Park Service employs more than 22,000 people and has more than 220,000 volunteers
- #6. Yellowstone became America's first national park on March 1st, 1872 by an Act signed by President Ulysses S. Grant (Hot Springs National Park in Arkansas earlier became the first federally protected U.S reservation in 1832)
- #7. For 32 years, the first caretaker of the national parks was the U.S. Cavalry, the 19th and early 20th Century mounted forces of the U.S. Army
- #8. In 1903, naturalist John Muir went camping in Yosemite with President Theodore Roosevelt – and so convinced Roosevelt of the need to preserve the American wild that Roosevelt went on to create 5 new national parks and 18 national monuments
- #9. The National Park Service became a U.S. government agency on August 25, 1916 via an Act signed by President Woodrow Wilson. At that time, 14 national parks and 21 national monuments had been approved by Congress – numbers that soon soared
- #10. The largest national park -- Wrangell-St. Elias in central Alaska – features a sprawling 13.2 million acres, big enough to hold Switzerland or Costa Rica. The park includes 9 of the 16 highest peaks in the U.S. and one of the nation's largest active volcanoes
- #11. The smallest national park site is just .02 acres – it's Thaddeus Kosciuszko Memorial in Philadelphia, once the personal home of the Polish freedom fighter who played a key role in the American Revolution.

- #12. More than 1,000 threatened and endangered animal species make their homes in National Park Service sites.
- #13. Abundant wildlife found in the national parks ranges from alligators, bald eagles, bison and blue whales to grizzly bears, lynx, panthers, sea lions, turtles and wolves
- #14. The highest point in North America, Mt. McKinley, is found in Alaska's Denali National Park, while the lowest point in the Western Hemisphere is in California's Death Valley
- #15. Superlatives abound in the National Parks System. Mammoth Cave National Park in Kentucky is home to the longest cave system in the world – more than 3, 454 miles; the world's largest gypsum dunefield can be found in White Sands National Monument in New Mexico; and the largest mangrove ecosystem in the Western Hemisphere is in Florida's Everglades National Park
- #16. Sequoia National Park in California hosts the world's largest single-stem tree by volume: the 275 ft., 33-ft. diameter General Sherman, estimated to be 2300-2700 years old, one of earth's living senior citizens. (Though not the oldest living tree)
- #17. The National Park System includes 2 tropical rain forests (in American Samoa), a coral reef (Biscayne National Park in Florida) and 47 thermal springs
- #18. Teddy Roosevelt has the most national park sites named after him, followed by Abraham Lincoln. In all, 35 parks are named after U.S. Presidents
- #19. California and Alaska are the states with the most national park sites – 8 each
- #20. In 2014, Delaware became the final state to inaugurate a national park site: First State National Historic Park, celebrating the ratification of the U.S. Constitution
- #21. Artists-in-residence paint, sculpt, write and compose at more than 40 National Park Service sites
- #22. The most frequently visited site in the National Park System is Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Francisco, followed by Blue Ridge Parkway in Virginia and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee and North Carolina
- #23. The least visited park is Aniakchak National Monument in the Aleutian Islands which had only 134 visitors in 2014 (and just 10 in 2012) owing to its remote location
- #24. The national parks feature a network of trails that span 18,000 miles, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the circumference of the earth
- #25. In 2015, the National Park Service established 7 new national park sites to explore

ABOUT THE CAST

Conrad Anker



World-class rock, ice and mountain climber **Conrad Anker** inspires a new generation of wilderness explorers in *America Wild*. Conrad is a climber's climber, as at home on a faraway alpine wall as on the sparkling ice of his home canyon, Hyalite, in the Gallatin Range of Montana. Over decades in the mountains, he has come to value the rarified air of Antarctica, the Himalaya and Montana equally.

Conrad's journeys have taken him from Alaska and Baffin Island to Patagonia and Antarctica, where in 1997 he, with Alex Lowe and Jon Krakauer, climbed 2,500-foot Rakekniven in Queen Maud Land. That climb led to film and magazine pieces by *National Geographic*, an organization Conrad continues to collaborate with. In Patagonia, Conrad climbed the three towers of the Cerro Torre group, ascending new routes on Torre Egger and Cerro Standhardt. In Pakistan's Karakorum, Conrad climbed the west face of Latok II, which begins at the altitude of Denali's summit, topping at 23,342 feet after 26 vertical pitches. In Pakistan, Conrad and rock legend Peter Croft climbed Spansar Peak, a first ascent by way of a 7,000-foot ridge the pair ascended in a day with minimal gear.

In May 2012, Conrad summited Everest for the third time, without supplemental oxygen, leading an educational and research-based expedition to the Southeast Ridge with The North Face, National Geographic, The Mayo Clinic and Montana State University. 13 years prior, in May 1999, Conrad found the body of early Everest explorer George Mallory. Conrad's discovery and analysis of the find as a member of the Mallory & Irvine Research expedition shed new light on pioneering expeditions. Eight years earlier, his second ascent of Everest was captured in a feature film about the disappearance of Mallory called *The Wildest Dream*.

Although he's been feted internationally – along with partners Jimmy Chin and Renan Ozturk -- for the May 2011 ascent of the Shark's Fin on 20,700-foot Mount Meru, Conrad took equal pleasure in his recent summit of Denali with his oldest son, Max. As captain of The North Face Athlete Team, Conrad has urged climbers to be boots on the ground in observing changes wrought by man-made climate change. He's also civically active at home, serving on the boards of the Montana State University Leadership Institute, Protect Our Winters, Bozeman Ice Tower Foundation, Gallatin County Fair Board and the Alex Lowe Charitable Foundation, which funds the Khumbu Climbing Center in Phortse, Nepal. www.ConradAnker.com

Rachel Pohl



At the heart of *America Wild* is young artist and adventurer Rachel Pohl's quest to visit all the national parks across the United States.

Born and raised in Bozeman, Montana, Rachel has always been at home in wilderness. She can often be found skiing, painting, climbing, mountain biking or exploring wild places. She also loves teaching art lessons and volunteering with at-risk adolescents.

This December Rachel will graduate from Montana State University with a BFA in Studio Art. In her work she strives to express the experience of being in wild places, the feeling of being surrounded by undulating energy, dazzling light, and being immersed in quiet solitude. The joyful nature of these paintings, with their vibrant colors and stylized forms, are reminiscent of the feeling of moving through a dynamic and billowing world of light and shadow.

Her work can be seen at www.rachelpohlart.com.

Max Lowe



Max Lowe connects with his friend Rachel Pohl and his step-father Conrad Anker amid the stunning beauty of the national parks in *America Wild*.

Before he could even walk, Max was taken into the wilderness and packed along on adventures across the globe. From his home in the mountains of Montana to Antarctica, Nepal and Mongolia, he has been witness to extraordinary moments, wildlife, people and places. It was from these experiences that stemmed his drive to traverse this world, and capture moments with his camera.

Born into a renowned outdoor family, Max grew up in the mountains alongside his parents Alex and Jennifer Lowe. After Alex passed away in 1999, Conrad Anker, Alex's best friend and climbing partner over the years, slowly became a big part of Max's life and eventually married his mother Jennifer.

Since Max graduated from college in 2011 he has continued to live in the realm of his father and step father, as a story teller via film and photo.

Over the years, Max has built his career around capturing the experience of those he travels with as they explore from the far reaches of the world around us, to places and issues right under our noses in the national parks in the US.

Max continues to work out of his home in Montana as a freelance filmmaker, photographer and storyteller. His work can be seen at www.maxlowemedia.com

ABOUT THE NARRATOR

Robert Redford



Robert Redford (narrator) is an ardent conservationist and environmentalist, a man who stands for social responsibility and political involvement, and an artist and businessman who is a staunch supporter of uncompromised creative expression.

Redford landed his first Broadway starring role in *SUNDAY IN NEW YORK*, followed by *LITTLE MOON OF ALBAN* and Neil Simon's *BAREFOOT IN THE PARK*, directed by Mike Nichols. His first movie role was in *WAR HUNT*. He reprised the role of Paul Bratter in the film version of *BAREFOOT IN THE PARK*, for which he received praise from critics and audiences. In 1969, Redford and Paul Newman teamed to star in *BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID*. Directed by George Roy Hill, the film became an instant classic and firmly established Redford as one of the industry's top leading men. He, Newman and Hill later reunited for *THE STING*, which won seven Oscars[®], including Best Picture, and brought Redford his Best Actor nomination.

He has since built a distinguished acting career, starring in such notable films as *JEREMIAH JOHNSON*, *THE WAY WE WERE*, *THE GREAT GATSBY*, *THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR*, *THE GREAT WALDO PEPPER*, *BRUBAKER*, *A BRIDGE TOO FAR*, *THE NATURAL*, *OUT OF AFRICA*, *LEGAL EAGLES*, *SNEAKERS*, *INDECENT PROPOSAL AND UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL*, *SPY GAME*, *THE LAST CASTLE*, *THE CLEARING*, *AN UNFINISHED LIFE* and *ALL IS LOST*. Recently, Redford co-starred in *A WALK IN THE WOODS*, a film he produced based on the Bill Bryson novel with Nick Nolte. Additionally, Redford starred as Dan Rather in Sony Pictures' Classics' *TRUTH*, directed by James Vanderbilt and also starring Cate Blanchett and Elizabeth Moss. The film chronicles the news story that irreversibly changed the life and legacy of legendary news anchor Dan Rather, and is based on the book *Truth and Duty* by Mary Mapes. He recently wrapped Disney's *PETE'S DRAGON*, directed by David Lowery, co-starring Bryce Dallas Howard. The film is scheduled for release in spring 2016.

Redford has starred in several films produced by his own Wildwood Enterprises, including DOWNHILL RACER, THE CANDIDATE, THE ELECTRIC HORSEMAN and ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN, which earned seven Oscar® nominations including Best Picture.

Redford won a Directors Guild of America Award, a Golden Globe Award and the Academy Award® for Best Director for his feature film directorial debut ORDINARY PEOPLE. He went on to direct and produce THE MILAGRO BEANFIELD WAR and A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT, for which he received a Best Director Golden Globe nomination; and earned dual Oscar® nominations for Best Picture and Best Director and a Golden Globe nomination for Best Director for QUIZ SHOW. He earned two Golden Globe nominations (Best Picture and Best Director) for THE HORSE WHISPERER. Other films as director and producer include THE LEGEND OF BAGGER VANCE, LIONS FOR LAMBS, THE CONSPIRATOR and THE COMPANY YOU KEEP.

A large part of Redford's life is his Sundance Institute, which he founded in 1981, and is dedicated to the support and development of emerging screenwriters and directors of vision, and to the national and international exhibition of new independent cinema. He has received the Screen Actors Guild's Lifetime Achievement Award, an Honorary Academy Award®, the Kennedy Center Honors, and the LEGION D'HONNEUR medal, France's highest recognition. Robert Redford has been a noted environmentalist and activist since the early 1970s and has served for almost 30 years as a Trustee of the Board the Natural Resources Defense Council.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

GREG MACGILLIVRAY (Director) is a giant-screen documentary filmmaker who has produced and directed many of the most successful films shown in IMAX® theatres, including the box-office hit *Everest* and the Academy Award®-nominated films *The Living Sea* and *Dolphins*. His 2015 film, *Humpback Whales*, received the Best Film of the Year award from the Giant Screen Cinema Association. With 38 giant-screen films to his credit, MacGillivray has shot more 70mm film than anyone in cinema history—more than two million feet. He is the first documentary filmmaker to reach the \$1 billion benchmark in worldwide ticket sales.

An ardent ocean conservationist, MacGillivray and his wife Barbara founded the One World One Ocean Foundation, a non-profit public charity devoted to ocean science education through giant-screen films and companion programming.

SHAUN MACGILLIVRAY (Producer) is President of MacGillivray Freeman Films and Managing Director of the company's One World One Ocean Campaign, a multi-year, multi-platform ocean media initiative aimed at inspiring greater public awareness about the world's oceans.

Producer of the award-winning 3D giant-screen films *Humpback Whales*, *Journey To The South Pacific*, *To The Arctic* and *Grand Canyon Adventure*, MacGillivray is also producing the company's forthcoming films *Dream Big: Engineering Wonders of the World* and *Return to Everest: Conquering Thin Air* (working title). The son of Academy Award®-nominated filmmaker Greg MacGillivray, Shaun grew up on film locations all around the world. To capture the breath-taking footage seen in *America Wild*, he and the crew travelled to more than 30 U.S. national parks.

STEPHEN JUDSON (Writer) has directed five films for IMAX® theatres, including most recently *The Alps* and *Journey into Amazing Caves*. He served as a producer, director, writer and editor on the giant-screen blockbuster *Everest*. Since 1982, Judson has edited all but two of MacGillivray Freeman's giant-screen films, making him the most experienced editor in the giant-screen field. He has written or co-written many MFF films, including the Oscar®-nominated *Dolphins*. He also serves as the company's Vice President for Production and Post Production.

Before joining the MacGillivray Freeman team, Judson worked as a writer/director/editor in Hollywood, including long stints at ABC and Universal Studios. A graduate of Yale University with an M.A. from the USC cinema school, Judson is a member of the Writer's Guild of America, and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

TIM CAHILL (Writer) has established a reputation as one of America's most evocative and humorous adventure travel writers. He is a founding editor of *Outside* magazine and is the author of such books as [Jaguars Ripped My Flesh](#), [Road Fever](#), [Hold The Enlightenment](#), [Pecked To Death by Ducks](#),

A Wolverine is Eating My Leg and Lost In My Own Backyard: A Walk in Yellowstone National Park. He has also served as a television writer and previously collaborated with MacGillivray Freeman Films on such films as *The Living Sea*, *Everest* and *Dolphins*. Cahill continues to serve as an editor-at-large for *Outside*.

MARK FLETCHER (Editor) has been a wildlife film editor and writer for more than 25 years, and has worked with leading wildlife filmmakers including Hugo van Lawick, Howard Hall and Alan Root. Films that he has produced, edited or written have won more than 50 Emmys and many other awards.

Credited as producer, writer and editor, he has made: *Andes: The Dragon's Back* (2006), *Penguins of Antarctica* (2007), *The Turtle's Guide to the Pacific* (2008), *Bears on Top of the World* (2008), *Clever Monkeys* (2009), *Secret Leopard* (2009), *Bringing up Baby* (2010), *Himalayas* (2010), *Aimal House* (2011) and *The Mating Game* (2013). Fletcher is known for his BBC Natural History Unit output for television, for BBC 1 and 2, including writing for David Attenborough. Recent projects range from leading editor and writer for ITV 1 *Aussie Animal Island* series, leading editor on the 5-part *Brazil* series for Terra Mater, and writer/editor of *Beavers* for WNET/Nature.

JASON PAUL (Editor) joined MacGillivray Freeman Films in 2011 as the in-house sound supervisor and digital editor for the award-winning One World One Ocean campaign. Since then, he has worked on many projects, from sizzle reels to behind-the-scenes webisodes and trailers. He also designed the audio and visual components of the interactive, traveling museum exhibit "Sea Monsters Revealed."

Paul is passionate about telling stories through the immersive IMAX format, and credits his years of working alongside Greg MacGillivray and Stephen Judson with his ability to use the unique IMAX medium to create a powerful and emotionally engaging story.

BRAD OHLUND (Director of Photography) has worked in the giant-screen industry for 25 years. His projects with MacGillivray Freeman Films include the giant-screen films *Dolphins*, *Adventures in Wild California*, *Journey Into Amazing Caves*, *Coral Reef Adventure*, *Mystery of the Nile*, *Greece: Secrets of the Past*, *Hurricane on the Bayou*, *Grand Canyon Adventure*, *Arabia*, *To The Arctic* and *Journey To The South Pacific*.

After attending Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, California, Ohlund began his career with the classic film *To Fly!* Since then, his broad and varied assignments have included filming underwater reefs in the South Pacific and primitive tribes in New Guinea and Borneo. He has filmed from a plane through the eye of a hurricane and captured the fury of an approaching tornado with an IMAX camera.

RON GOODMAN (Aerial Photography) is president of SpaceCam Systems, Inc., the company he founded in 1989 that is regarded as the world leader in high-end gyro-stabilized cinematography. As SpaceCam designer, in 1996 he was the recipient of the Academy Award of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for Scientific and Engineering Achievement. Recently, Ron completed design of the revolutionary SnakeHead Camera System, a fully articulated, computer-controlled, gyro-stabilized, horizontally-oriented periscope. Supporting full frame 70/15P format, SnakeHead is designed to capture the imagery associated with fast aircraft. Ron is also vice-president of StarDance Pictures Inc. and a script writer with several films to his credit.

A native of Canada, Ron has been based in Los Angeles for over 20 years. As a young cameraman and inventor, he spent 14 years in Europe where he established a reputation as a leader in aerial cinematography, contributing key material to Star Wars and Superman films and the longest single uncut shot in film history -- the final sequence in Antonioni's *The Passenger*. In 1976, Ron won the Scandinavian Commercial Cinematography award.

Over the years, many winning sequences for the Academy Award® for Cinematography have featured Ron's aerial work. He also earned the Giant Screen Cinema Films (GSCA) Best Cinematography Award in 2001, 2004 and 2007. In 2007, he also received the GSCA Film Achievement Award for his work on *The Alps*.

During his period in Europe, Ron made many engineering improvements to the original Wescam camera system, finally culminating in the launch of the "X Mount" in 1980, which was later renamed GyroSphere. At SpaceCam, he designed a totally new gyro-stabilized camera system that remains the standard in the film industry for aerial cinematography.

Today, SpaceCam is utilized in 80% of large Hollywood features. Ron also successfully developed an IMAX® version of the system and has participated on numerous IMAX films.

STEVE WOOD (Composer) has been scoring films with Greg MacGillivray since MacGillivray's surfing cult classic *Five Summer Stories* in 1975. Since then, Wood has worked on more than 20 giant-screen films, including *The Living Sea*, *To Fly!*, *The Magic of Flight*, *Everest*, *Dolphins*, *Greece: Secrets of the Past*, *Hurricane on the Bayou*, *The Alps*, *Arabia*, *To The Arctic* and *Grand Canyon Adventure* with Dave Matthews Band. He worked with Sting on both *The Living Sea* and *Dolphins*, and with George Harrison on *Everest*.

Wood has been honored with six GSCA Film Achievement Awards for Best Soundtrack, which is presented by the Giant Screen Cinema Association.

ABOUT THE FILM SPONSORS AND PARTNERS

About Brand USA

Brand USA is the public-private partnership responsible for promoting the United States as a premier travel destination and communicating U.S. entry/exit policies and procedures. Established by the Travel Promotion Act in 2010, the organization's mission is to increase international visitation to the United States while working in partnership with the travel industry to maximize the economic and social benefits of travel. These benefits include creating jobs essential to the economy and fostering understanding between people and cultures. For industry or partner information about Brand USA, visit www.TheBrandUSA.com. For information about travel to and around the United States, please visit Brand USA's consumer website at www.DiscoverAmerica.com.

About MacGillivray Freeman Films

MacGillivray Freeman Films is the world's foremost independent producer and distributor of giant-screen 70mm films with 38 films for IMAX and giant-screen theatres to its credit. Throughout the company's 50-year history, its films have won numerous international awards including two Academy Award® nominations and three films inducted into the IMAX Hall of Fame. MacGillivray Freeman's films are known for their artistry and celebration of science and the natural world. It is the first documentary film company to reach the one billion dollar benchmark for worldwide box office. For more information about the company, visit www.macgillivrayfreemanfilms.com.

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About The Giant Dome Theater Consortium

The Giant Dome Theater Consortium (GDTC) incorporated in 2010 to foster educational film production for the most unique theaters in the world. The GDTC facilitates film production through financial support, and encourages the use of technical standards that maximize the experiential impact of the giant dome screen. Member institutions of the GDTC are Cincinnati Museum Center; Discovery Place, Inc., Charlotte; Museum of Science, Boston; Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago; Reuben H. Fleet Science Center, San Diego; Science Museum of Minnesota and the St. Louis Science Center.

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America Wild: National Parks Adventure is a MacGillivray Freeman film produced in association with Brand USA. The film is presented globally by Expedia, Inc. and Subaru of America, Inc. Major support provided by the Giant Dome Theater Consortium.