

# SEASON TWO SCREENING KIT

# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S STRANGEDAYS ON PLANET EARTH

*Imagine a healthy planet with healthy humans living on it: the world has embarked on a path to clean energy, clean air and fresh water and an ocean teeming with life; we are feeding ourselves without compromising land or sea and parents are starting to believe that their children will inherit a better, safer world.*

This vision of the future is the driving force behind the *Strange Days on Planet Earth* project.

## Introduction

Thank you for downloading the *Strange Days on Planet Earth: Season Two* Screening Kit. The main goals of the *Strange Days on Planet Earth* project are to: raise awareness of our most pressing environmental and societal challenges, highlight solutions and inspire action and stewardship. Our ultimate mission is to use film as a vehicle for change and transform viewership into stewardship. How can this be accomplished? One proven method is through the generation of meaningful public discourse before and after viewing. This screening kit is designed to help guide such communication endeavors in three ways:

- By providing background information and highlighting episode content
- By offering communication tips and exposing common public misconceptions
- By offering suggestions to help spark discussions before and after viewing

We welcome any and all feedback—including stories you care to share about your screening events. Please email comments to [info@seastudios.org](mailto:info@seastudios.org).

## Background Information and Episode Navigation Tips

The second season of *Strange Days on Planet Earth* explores the far-reaching and often unpredictable consequences of pouring myriad pollutants into our global waters systems and pulling myriad creatures out of our ocean. Before screening either episode, we recommend reviewing in detail the *Strange Days on Planet Earth* PBS website at [www.pbs.org/strangedays](http://www.pbs.org/strangedays). Particularly helpful sections include **From the Episode**, which offers additional factual content along with primary references, and the **What Can We Do** section, which provides numerous solutions accessible to viewers.

# SEASON TWO SCREENING KIT

# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S STRANGEDAYS ON PLANET EARTH

Useful background information can be found in a recent 2008 report in *Science* magazine entitled: *A Global Map of Human Impacts to Marine Ecosystems* which provides an overview of many topics covered in the series. This report and its accompanying *interactive map* (see references below) highlight how every single square foot of ocean has been impacted by modern society, and how humans have fouled more than forty percent of the seas with polluted runoff, overfishing, and other actions.

While the U.S. is making progress on these issues, the pace of remediation remains unfortunately slow. The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative's 2007 report card gave the nation a grade of C, up from a C minus in 2006 but nevertheless a C. This report card offers an annual retrospective assessment of the collective progress the nation has made toward implementing recommendations of the 2004 U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the 2003 Pew Oceans Commission. The latter two reports also offer comprehensive overviews of world ocean health and are offered below.

## References

- B. S. Halpern, S. Walbridge, K. A. Selkoe, C. V. Kappel, F. Micheli, C. D'Agrosa et al. (2008) [A Global Map of Human Impact on Marine Ecosystems](#). *Science* Vol. 319. no. 5865, pp. 948 – 952. View this informative [interactive map](#) of the Impacts.
- Joint Ocean Commission Initiative: [2007 U.S. Ocean Policy Report Card](#)
- Pew Oceans Commission Report (2003) [America's Living Oceans: Charting a Course for Sea Change](#); US Commission on Ocean Policy (2004) ["An Ocean Blueprint for the 21st Century."](#)

## Communication Tips and Common Public Misconceptions

Throughout the *Strange Days on Planet Earth* project, we have found that exposing connections between seemingly disparate elements and placing individual issues within a larger global framework function both as excellent storytelling devices and crucial tools for raising public awareness and inspiring stewardship. Connections help people understand how an issue works, how a problem has developed, how it connects to other problems and most importantly how higher level solutions, such as restoring an entire ecosystem and watershed, can result in multiple benefits and solve numerous problems simultaneously.

# SEASON TWO SCREENING KIT

# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S STRANGEDAYS ON PLANET EARTH

Additionally, we've learned that viewers can often carry misconceptions and counterproductive patterns of thinking which can impinge upon comprehension and present obstacles to action. Below are some common examples:

- Separate Environment—This is the belief that the environment is distinct from humans instead of part of the fabric upon which our survival depends. Accompanying this idea is the thought that the only way to save the environment is to adopt a “hands-off” approach. The most effective solutions often involve actively managing natural resources and developing new systems that meet human needs in more sustainable ways—not simply saying nature is something to be put behind a fence and cordoned off from humanity. When speaking about environmental issues, it is vital to erase the distinction between the environment and “us” and instead reinforce the idea that when we hurt natural systems, we are in fact hurting ourselves.
- Little Picture—This is the tendency to think in little pictures and focus on perspectives only at the human scale. For example, it is often much easier to focus on dirty beaches than on an entire dysfunctional ocean ecosystem. Care should be taken to always place local issues into the larger planetary context.
- Pseudo Clean Water—This is the inclination to think that water that looks clean is also healthy. Clean-looking water can often obscure less visible but potentially more harmful damages stemming from chronic overfishing and/or habitat destruction. It is important here to reiterate how in order to have truly healthy water, the associated ecosystem and food web must be intact and functioning.
- Modernization Woes—This is the tendency to see damages to natural systems and the loss of habitats as the inevitable if unfortunate cost of progress. Remind viewers that modernization can also offer better, less destructive approaches that can now accomplish multiple conservation goals in smarter, more efficient and often economical ways. Examples of this include: wiser management of fisheries and seafood resources that take into account the whole ecosystem instead of single species, the development of hybrid cars and other less carbon emitting vehicles, greening of the urban environment and adoption of green buildings into new housing and industrial developments.
- Negative Interconnections—This is the tendency to focus on negative connections with other countries instead of beneficial interrelations e.g. job out-sourcing, military operations, and endless foreign aid vs. progressive international partnerships, scientific collaborations and economic synergies. This negative pattern of thinking can work against understanding how global cooperation is

# SEASON TWO SCREENING KIT

# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S STRANGEDAYS ON PLANET EARTH

essential for creating effective, long-term solutions. One example of global synergy is the role the multi-national Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has played in advancing our understanding of the far-reaching effects of climate change.

## Episode Notes

### Episode Five: *Dangerous Catch*

In this episode, the series investigates the far-reaching effect of overfishing. Ninety percent of the worldwide stocks of large marine predatory fish like tuna and swordfish have disappeared since the 1950s and one third of our fisheries have already collapsed. Our insatiable demand for seafood, however, is affecting more than just life in the seas. Dwindling fish supplies are setting off ripple effects that are jeopardizing wildlife deep in the African bush and unraveling village life in some regions. Struggling fish stocks may also be spurring on toxic explosive events that are releasing heat-trapping gasses into the atmosphere and hampering fish stock recovery. Throughout the episode, good news and solutions are offered and viewers are reminded that by reducing our take from the ocean, restoring wild fish stocks and protecting ocean habitats, we can all initiate a very different set of ripple effects, ones that can simultaneously replenish life on land and rebuild the very life-support systems upon which our survival depends.

This three-act episode is 53:32 minutes in length and is divided into twelve chapters:

### Act One

Chapter 1 Intro: 0:00:00--0:02:42

Chapter 2 Disappearing African Wildlife: 0:02:42--0:08:37

Chapter 3 Marauding Baboons: 0:08:37--0:12:02

Chapter 4 Bushmeat: 12:02--15:25

Chapter 5 Fish Connection: 15:25--20:15

### Act Two

Chapter 6 Mystery in Namibia: 21:59--28:22

Chapter 7 Secrets in the Mud: 28:22--36:53

Chapter 8 Explosions, Sardines and Climate Change: 36:53--40:16

# SEASON TWO SCREENING KIT

# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S STRANGEDAYS ON PLANET EARTH

## Act Three

Chapter 9 Fish Farming and the Promise of Multi-Species Farms: 40:16--47:18

Chapter 10 Offshore Aquaculture and the Aquapod: 47:18--51:45

Chapter 11 Conclusion: 51:45--53:00

Chapter 12 End credits: 53:00--53:32

## Episode Six: *Dirty Secrets*

In this episode, the series explores how seemingly small, but daily doses of pollutants e.g. sewage, fertilizers, plastics and carbon dioxide, can lead to disturbing changes in our waters. Researchers explore how our everyday actions are linked to a series of bizarre mysteries including: striped bass succumbing to flesh-eating bacteria in Chesapeake Bay; majestic seabirds starving in Hawai'i--their bellies seemingly full and; coral reefs weakening under a growing assault of invisible contaminants. Meanwhile, a known hormone-disrupting chemical called bisphenol A is also showing up in streams and rivers across the nation, potentially jeopardizing the health of animals, including humans. Something is clearly amiss in our water supply. Throughout the episode and in the website, solutions are highlighted including actions that individuals can take to bring about beneficial changes.

This four-act episode is 53:32 minutes long and is divided into twelve chapters:

## Act One

Chapter 1 Introduction: 00:00--1:18

Chapter 2 Yucatan Peninsula and Groundwater Woes: 01:18--06:36

Chapter 3 Underground Rivers and Cenotes: 06:36--11:18

Chapter 4 Mapping the Caves: 11:18--16:04

## Act Two

Chapter 5 Sick Striped Bass: 16:04--27:12

Chapter 6 New Solutions: 27:12--30:00

# SEASON TWO SCREENING KIT

# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S STRANGEDAYS ON PLANET EARTH

## Act Three

Chapter 7 Plastic Ocean Pollution, Albatross: 30:00--37:20

Chapter 8 Sampling Trash: 37:20--41:05

Chapter 9 Plastic and Bisphenol A: 41:05--45:41

## Act Four

Chapter 10 Climate Change and Coral Reefs, Bleaching and Acidification: 45:41--52:22

Chapter 11 Conclusion: 52:22--52:59

Chapter 12 End Credits: 52:59--53:32

## Pre and Post Viewing Questions and Discussion Suggestions

Engaging the audience in thoughtful discussions wherein they can share their own personal views and experiences is essential to promoting understanding, building a sense of community and inspiring viewers to become part of the solution. With this in mind, we offer a few suggestions and starting questions:

### Episode 5: *Dangerous Catch*

#### Pre-Viewing Questions

Aim for having participants carry the discussion as much as possible. Try to encourage a positive spirit to ensure audience participation and politely limit overly vocal or negative comments. Commend ideas and thoughts presented and energize the discussion as a springboard for individual engagement and action.

1. What's the first thing you think about when you hear the word ocean?
2. What are some of the main impacts you think humans are having on the ocean?
3. How important is the ocean to your life personally? Aside from providing seafood, what roles do you think the ocean plays in supporting human livelihood?
4. How does the health of the ocean rank on your list of challenges affecting the future of humanity?
5. What typically influences your seafood selection on at the marketplace and restaurants?

# SEASON TWO SCREENING KIT

# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S STRANGEDAYS ON PLANET EARTH

## Post-viewing Questions

Ask for brief reactions to the film or sections of the film you shared. Try to have everyone who wants to make a comment do so. To spark more detailed discussions and start people talking, consider the following questions:

1. What surprised you the most about the myriad forces influencing hunting pressures on African wildlife in Ghana?
2. What are some potential local and/or international solutions to this issue? To supplement this discussion, consider showing the short Rashid Sumaila Video Interview from the *Strange Days* PBS website.
3. Renowned ecologist, Aldo Leopold, once said, "To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering." The story in Namibia underscores how removal of one "cog" in an ecosystem, e.g. algae-eating sardines, can lead to unforeseen consequences. What other interconnected ecosystems can you think of and how might removal of one element weaken these system?
4. How could an increase in Namibia's sulfur events influence the global climate?
5. What do you think the pros and cons are of aquaculture? Do you think aquaculture holds promise for the future?
6. What individual actions do you think will make the most difference in restoring the health of the ocean and which ones are you considering taking? Examples might include: selecting Marine Stewardship certified fish or giving up eating fish, supporting policies for Marine Protected Areas, reducing energy and water use, and making wise consumer choices.

Consider downloading **Seafood Watch Cards** particular to your specific region of the country at [www.mbayaq.org/cr/SeafoodWatch/web/sfw\\_regional.aspx](http://www.mbayaq.org/cr/SeafoodWatch/web/sfw_regional.aspx) and have these available for audience members to take with them.

## Episode 6: *Dirty Secrets*

## Pre-viewing Questions

Aim for having participants carry the discussion as much as possible. Try to encourage a positive spirit to ensure audience participation and politely limit overly vocal or negative comments. Commend ideas and thoughts presented and energize the discussion as a springboard for individual engagement and action.

# SEASON TWO SCREENING KIT

# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S STRANGEDAYS ON PLANET EARTH

1. Discuss where your local water comes from and identify the boundaries of your local watershed. A useful resource for locating watersheds can be found at the US Geological Society's website Science in Your Watershed at [www.water.usgs.gov/wsc/map\\_index.html](http://www.water.usgs.gov/wsc/map_index.html). You may want to review this before the screening.
2. How might your daily activities be affecting your local water supplies and nearby aquatic environments?
3. What percentage of your household waste is plastic that you recycle versus plastic or materials that aren't recyclable?
4. What individual actions do you think might be affecting the global water supply and world ocean? In addition to land-based pollutants, consider energy consumption in your answer as well.

## Post-viewing Questions

Ask for brief reactions to the film or sections of the film you shared. Try to have everyone who wants to make a comment do so. To spark more detailed discussions and start people talking, consider the following questions:

1. The Yucatán is a tourist haven that may turn into a wasteland. Do you think travel should be discouraged even if that would have a detrimental economic impact? Can travel and tourism have positive impacts?
2. The striped bass is presented as a "canary in the coal mine". Can you think of other warning signs or animals around the world that also function as indicators of environmental health?
3. Charles Moore concludes his sequence about the "Great Garbage Patch" with the statement that, "the ocean is downhill from everywhere." Discuss the far-reaching implications of this statement.
4. With the enormous challenges of recycling plastic, reducing excess plastic waste and avoiding industrial-produced pollutants, what individual daily actions do you think matter the most? What actions are you likely to take? Consider downloading the [Strange Days Smart Plastic Guide](#) and encouraging participants to visit the [Strange Days Interactive Market](#) for more green shopping tips at the [www.pbs.org/strangedays/](http://www.pbs.org/strangedays/) website.
5. What actions can individuals take to slow climate change? Consider downloading the [Strange Days Climate Friendly Checklist](#), at [www.pbs.org/strangedays/](http://www.pbs.org/strangedays/), to supplement this discussion.