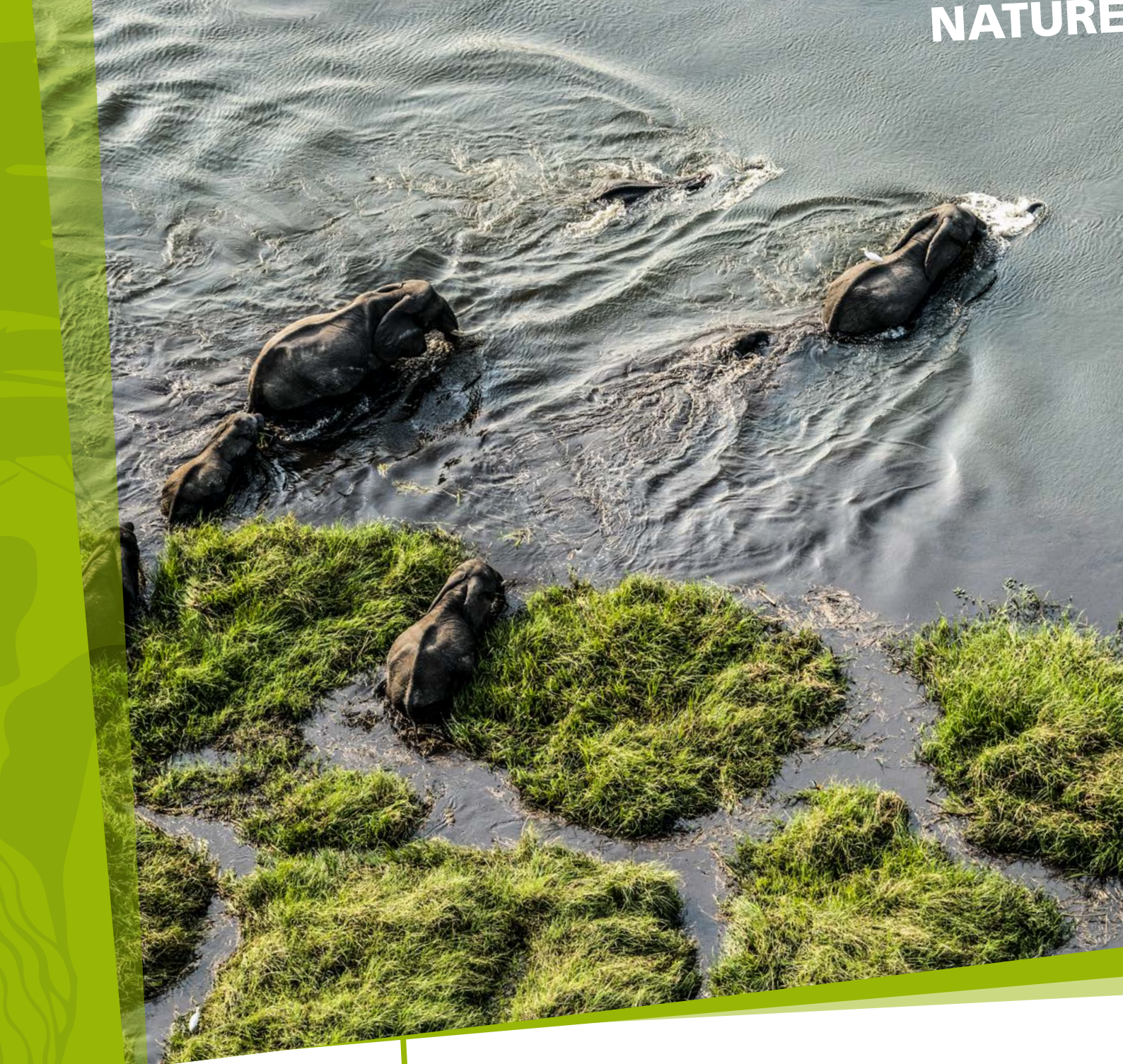


NATURE



**4K** **OKAVANGO**  
**RIVER OF DREAMS**

4 x 52 min. Written and directed by **Dereck Joubert**

4K, 5.1 and Stereo Executive producers: **Ivo Filatsch, Sabine Holzer**



**TERRA MATER**  
Factual Studios

The Okavango, in southwest Africa, is a very special river. It is born deep in the highlands of Angola—but instead of flowing westward to the Atlantic Ocean, the Okavango runs inland, to the East. There, in Botswana, its waters create a huge river delta before they eventually disappear in the Kalahari Desert.

The Okavango Delta is a true natural wonder—an unlikely oasis, a lush paradise in the middle of a hostile desert, that harbours, supports and feeds an incredible abundance of wildlife. This outstanding four-part blue-chip series presents pure nature at its finest. The journey along the Okavango reflects the three distinct and very different phases of this remarkable river.

### **Episode 1: Paradise**

In the first episode, we visit the deep water of the Upper Okavango in Botswana. Months after the rains in the Angolan mountains, their water is flooding down the Okavango, turning the landscape into a lush paradise, and the river into a vast swamp.

This film features the amazing story of Fekeetsa. The lioness is part of a pride of lions that one day tries to catch a buffalo—when everything turns wrong. To defend his calf, an adult buffalo attacks Fekeetsa, and injures her severely. Her pride waits for days, but then leaves her for dead. However, Fekeetsa's story is far from over. Slowly, she recovers and tries to survive in these swamps alone now—and she must hunt to feed not only herself, but her two cubs as well.

We see elephants wading, carving channels through the thick reed beds. By doing so, they act as landscape architects, because they open ever more ways where the water is following. The flow, the direction, and the speed of the Okavango are changed—the elephants have a huge impact not only on the environment, but also on the actual lives of all creatures.

Fekeetsa is hunting in the swamp all alone. The water makes her life easier, as its buoyancy eases the pain of her shattered ankle. The brave lioness can't run very good anymore, but she has learned to find other prey—one that's easier for her to pick, like new-born Lechwe antelopes.

Her name is part of a phrase in Botswana: *Fekeetsa di gkwetho* means overcoming a handicap, a challenge. And against all odds, Fekeetsa truly is a survivor ...

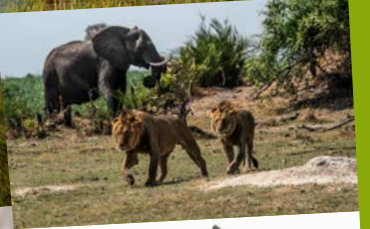
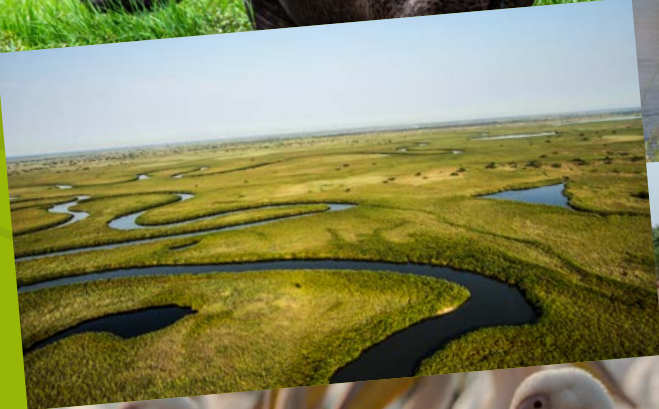
### **Episode 2: Limbo**

The second episode presents the Middle world of the Okavango. This unique wetland, made up from water and countless islands, stretches over a vast area. Here, the Okavango is most dynamic and alive, feeding, and being fed on.

The main character is The King, a male lion who, together with his brother, rules these floodplains. He has to fend off younger lions that are challenging his long-lasting reign, keeping the impatient younger generation at bay. Yet, the cause for this environment is not the King of Beasts—but a tiny creature, just a few millimetres long: a termite. Using a special combination of saliva and hard calcrete, these insects are building underground fortresses, blockades against the rising water table of the Okavango flood. With time, towering castles rise several metres up into the air.

In this flat landscape, any high ground forces the flood waters to spread around these islands, creating a sprawling delta across 15,000 square kilometres of Botswana. Those that can adapt to this watery world have an advantage. In an extraordinary sequence, a hyena family and a warthog family are sharing neighbouring dens. Hyenas can easily rip a warthog to pieces, but for some reason, in this case they extend a kind of welcome. A solution develops—both sides are helping each other by keeping an eye on approaching predators that might pose a threat to both families.

The flooded swamplands of the Okavango delta are also ideal for Painted dogs. It's one of the last strongholds in the world for these highly endangered animals. They hunt by testing for weaknesses, forcing mistakes. The hungry pack starts an attack on a herd of wildebeest. Against hunting dogs, the best defence is a show of unity—and the wildebeests know it, so they are trying to stay closely together. But as aerial drone shots are revealing, the pack's technique is to divide and conquer. After each attack, the retreat of one or several dogs is actually a ploy to draw one wildebeest away, so that other pack members can surround it.



### **Episode 3: Inferno**

The third episode explores the Lower Okavango and its fate. It reveals how the river is ending in the Kalahari Desert, when it has eventually run its course. The landscape here is baked dry by the scorching sun. The water is disappearing, either by evaporating up into the sky, or by seeping down into the ground. This way, the river leaves precious salt and nutrients behind. Where the water touches the desert, the paradise turns into an inferno. And yet, there are creatures that survive here, because they have learned to adapt to these extreme conditions.

A leopardess called Moporoto tries to bring up her two young cubs. Her name is the local expression for the sausage tree, because she learned to hunt from above. The flowers of the sausage tree attract animals like antelopes that feed on the fallen flowers under the trees. Moporoto just has to wait, jump down onto her prey, and kill it. But Moporoto's cubs are far from safe, as hyenas and lions are roaming the area. Luckily, leopards are extremely good in climbing trees—something where lions don't show a great deal of talent.

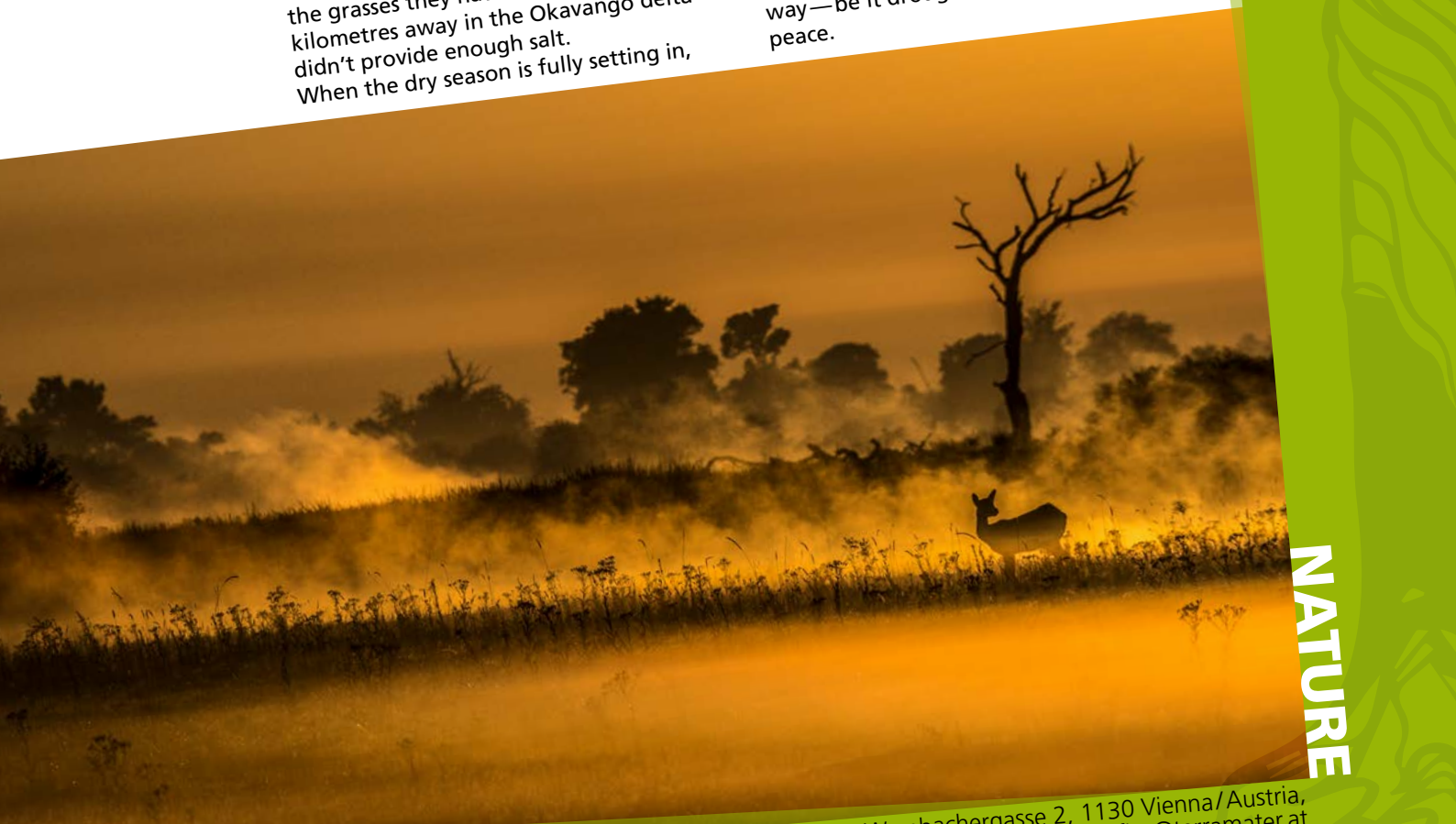
From the remaining waters and vegetation further southeast, the landscape starts to become ever drier, and the conditions ever harsher. Nevertheless, large herds of zebra and wildebeest migrate over long distances to these dry plains in search for salt. They desperately need minerals, because the grasses they have been feeding on 500 kilometres away in the Okavango delta didn't provide enough salt. When the dry season is fully setting in,

catfish and even hippos get stuck in the mud of shrinking pools. Some desert leopards have learned to feed on dead fish and even hippos that didn't manage to escape in time.

For Moporoto and her cubs, the chances are good to survive the constant changes—because the leopard family is constantly moving. Everyone in this land of extremes is on the move, because it is the end of the water—and eventually, the Okavango, this River of Dreams, is ghosting away ...

### **Episode 4: Divine Journey**

The fourth episode provides a unique insight into how this series came to life. Closely following in the footsteps of wildlife filmmakers Dereck and Beverly Joubert, we learn how underwater sequences in a river full of crocodiles can be filmed without fatalities. We experience the first-hand magic of drone shots that provide an overview over a vast terrain, over sceneries unfolding below—following a pride of lions on the hunt, accompanying elephants on their strenuous journey through marshland, or capturing mesmerising images of zebras and their shadows which resemble Fata Morgana-like illusions. On this 'Divine Journey', we get a glimpse of what it's like to film (and live!) in the vast Okavango region over the course of many years, where life goes on either way—be it drought or flood, danger or peace.



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