



DISCOVERY

the greatest adventure

National Geographic Society projects

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Publications and Promotions

The world's largest non-profit scientific and educational organisation, the National Geographic Society (NGS) was founded in 1888 by 33 men in Washington who had one quality in common: curiosity about the world and everything in it. The purpose of the Society was 'for the increase and diffusion of geographical knowledge'. Since then it has supported scientific exploration and spread information to its more than nine million members worldwide.

The NGS educates and inspires millions every day through magazines, books, television programmes, videos, maps and atlases, research grants and other innovative projects and materials.

Over the years the collection of videos produced by the National Geographic Society in the Film and Video Collection of the Library Service has steadily increased and today reflects an interesting variety of projects supported by the Society. A selection of the titles in stock featuring undersea exploration and various archaeological expeditions and projects are highlighted here to whet the appetite.

Undersea exploration

Dive to the edge of creation /

producer, James Lipscomb; directors, James Lipscomb and Alfred Giddings.

Until recently, it was generally thought that below a certain depth, life on the ocean floor was impossible.

As sunlight could not penetrate that far, photosynthesis, essential to sustain life, could not take place. In 1977 scientists found the first evidence that this theory might have to be revised. Subsequently, two research vessels, one of them equipped with a submersible, embarked upon an expedition to an area more than 200 miles north-east of the Galapagos Islands, where a mile-and-a-half below the surface, vents in the mid-oceanic ridge warm the water sufficiently to enable life to flourish. This film accompanies the scientists as they first relocate the original site and then venture down to discover an entirely new ecosystem supported by chemosynthesis. It is narrated by actor Leslie Nielsen. (This programme is also available on 16mm.) Awards: Emmy Award; American Film Festival, New York.

The lost fleet of Guadalcanal /

producer, Robert Kenner.

Guadalcanal in the South West Pacific, is part of the Solomon Islands. During World War II, between August 1942 and February 1943, a series of land and sea battles took place between Allied and Japanese forces, resulting in the deaths of thousands. In addition the channel north of the island, now known as Iron Bottom Sound, became the last resting place of some fifty war ships. Fifty years later, Doctor Robert Ballard, who had previously located the Titanic and the Bismarck, leads a combined National Geographic Society/United States Navy expedition to the site, accompanied by veterans of both sides. Their attempts to track down and identify as many ships as possible are intercut with the reminiscences of those who were present half a century ago. Like all such searches, it cannot fail to fascinate and is well worth seeing.

Pearl Harbor: legacy of attack /

producer, Patrick Prentice; directors, Kirk Wolfinger and Michael Rosenfeld.

On Sunday morning, 7 December 1941, the imperial navy and air force of Japan launched an unprovoked attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The object was to eliminate the American Pacific

Fleet, which could have put a halt to Japan's territorial ambitions in the East. More than 2 400 Americans died in the attack, which was directly responsible for the United States entering World War II.

This programme from National Geographic Television was made to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the attack and uses archival black and white footage to trace the events of that day. This is embellished by the reminiscences of surviving veterans, who tell their own stories and recall their shipmates. The material is intercut with an NGS-sponsored search, led by Doctor Robert Ballard, for a Japanese midget submarine, which was sunk an hour before the actual attack took place, an incident that somehow failed to alert the Americans to the dangers facing them. One of the battleships sunk on that day was the USS Arizona, which is now a memorial preserved by the National Parks Board. A remote-controlled camera is used to explore this underwater site. Some of the archival footage used is actually generic material, but it is a good reconstruction, often very moving when it deals with the survivors' memories.

Secrets of the Titanic / producer, Nicolas Noxon; directors, Graham Hurley and Robert D Ballard.

When it was launched, the luxury liner Titanic was the largest moving object ever made by man. Built in Belfast for the White Star Line, it was considered unsinkable. On the night of April 14, 1912, while on its maiden voyage from Southampton to New York, the ship struck an iceberg and sank with a loss of 1 523 lives. In 1985, after months of research, the wreck of the Titanic was found lying upright on the ocean floor at a depth of about 13 000 foot. The following year, Doctor Robert D Ballard and a team from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution revisited the site, located some 350 miles off the coast of Nova Scotia, and sent down a robot submarine to explore the wreck, bringing back the first pictures of the vessel in close to 75 years. Using archival footage and new documentary material, this programme is a record of the expedition and attempts to reconstruct the events of that fateful night. It is narrated by actor Martin Sheen.

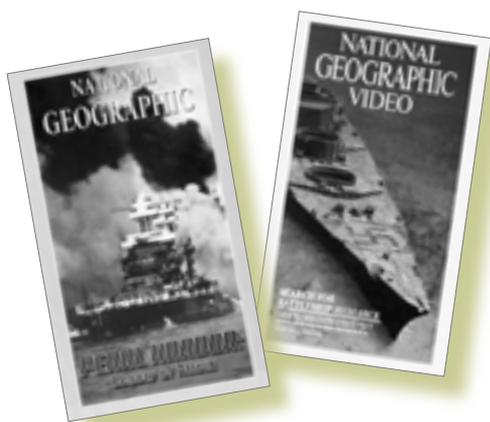
More titles

Atocha: quest for treasure

The battle for Midway

Last voyage of the Lusitania

Search for the battleship Bismarck.



Archaeological expeditions

Dinosaur hunters / producer, Lisa Truitt.

The Gobi Desert in Mongolia is home to one of the richest fossil deposits in the world. In 1922, Roy Chapman Andrews visited the desert on behalf of the American Museum of Natural History in New York and became the first person to find the fossil of an oviraptor, a bird-like dinosaur that became extinct some 80 million years ago. After the communists came to power, Mongolia became almost out of bounds to foreigners, but in recent years scientific expeditions have returned to the Gobi Desert.

This video from the National Geographic Society accompanies a new expedition from the American Museum of Natural History as they return to the area that Andrews visited and is present as they find the fossilised skeletons of three oviraptors, as well as a clutch of eggs. The fossils eventually find their way to New York, where one is uncovered by a resident palaeontologist. It is very interesting material and the programme includes footage of the original 1922 expedition.

Inca mummies: secrets of a lost empire / producer and director, Allison Argo.

Though it lasted for only one hundred years, the Inca empire was the greatest of the western hemisphere and its people accomplished great things. Its terraces survive to this day and the remains of its great cities continue to dazzle. Not much was known about the Incas themselves, but this programme from the National Geographic Society sheds some fascinating light on the people. Keeping just ahead of the utility companies that are installing lights and sewers, archaeologists are digging up numerous mummies that lie buried under a dusty schoolyard in a town consisting of previously homeless families. Some 200 bundles are eventually disinterred and transported to a laboratory for unwrapping.

An expedition to Vilcabamba, the last refuge of the Incas who fled the invading Spanish conquistadors, also finds some remains high in the Andes, but here, as elsewhere, looters arrived before them. The mummies that are recovered are described as time capsules, providing information about these people's lives more than 500 years ago. In some areas the descendants of the Incas are rebuilding the ancient terraces and irrigation canals, and at school their children are learning about their ancestors. A very interesting programme, though it is alarming to see how much has already been lost.

Into the great pyramid / producer and director, Cynthia Page.

Every year there seems to be a new video on ancient Egypt and this one follows close on the heels of **Egypt eternal: the quest for lost tombs**. It also comes from the National Geographic Society and focuses on an event that took place in September 2002. It follows a team of archaeologists and engineers as they explore the great pyramid at Giza and, more specifically, get ready to send a robotic camera up a secret shaft that leads from the queen's chamber. Parallel to this are the preparations for opening the tomb of a senior overseer in charge of building the pyramid, said to be the oldest sealed sarcophagus yet found. A third angle deals with the excavation of a workers' city, which has led to new information on just who built the pyramid, their living conditions and the organisation of the entire giant enterprise. The robotic probe and the opening of the sarcophagus were transmitted live and footage of the original programme is incorporated into this follow-up account. There are a few partial re-enactments, but most of it is straight documentary material. Egypt's head of Antiquities, Doctor Zahi Awass, features prominently. The most interesting aspect of the film is the exploration of a great number of shafts, corridors and chambers, and one isn't too disappointed that when the robotic probe finally manages to bore through the stone blocking the secret shaft, the camera reveals just another stone set a little further back. There are many such programmes, but each new one adds some more information and the subject remains fascinating.

Supercroc / producer, Simon Boyce.

In the desert of Niger, the skull of a giant, prehistoric crocodile is found. Palaeontologist Paul Sereno is called in to help excavate it and afterwards it is taken to his laboratory at the University of Chicago. It is the largest crocodile ever found and from the skull Sereno hopes to reconstruct the rest of its skeleton. In order to create an accurate, full-scale model, he needs to collect data from living species of crocodile, for which he gets assistance from reptile expert Brady Barr. They travel to Florida, Costa Rica and India to do research, with the filmmaker including additional footage shot in Australia. From this a model is made, which turns out to be 40 foot long. It is calculated that the supercroc would have been large and strong enough to kill the dinosaurs with which it co-existed and, most interestingly, except for its size, it looks very similar to the creature that exists today.

Troy / producer and director, Tim Baney.

The programme seeks to examine whether Troy actually existed and whether the events described by Homer in the *Iliad* really occurred. As part of this it discusses the 1873 excavations of Heinrich Schliemann, who turns out to have been a very doubtful character, as well as those of later archaeological expeditions. The conclusion is that Troy did exist, and that some of the events surrounding the siege of Troy by the armies of Agamemnon could have occurred.

The intrepid explorers and researchers in these programmes have spared us the mosquitoes, jungle fevers, sand storms, mud slides, dangerous ascents and descents, un-navigable rivers, cramped spaces, decompression sickness and many other dangers waiting to claim adventurers and have enabled us to discover the marvels of our planet on a television screen. Librarians can make their feats worth all the hardship by sharing their experiences with library patrons. Not only is it riveting to watch, but educational as well and could be put to good use in your library during school holidays.

Switch on the VCR in your library today and embark on the first of many adventures with the National Geographic Society!

Reference

National Geographic expeditions atlas.- National Geographic, c2000.
(Consult the web site of the National Geographic Society at www.nationalgeographic.com)

Note: Reviews by Freddy Ogterop, Film/Video/DVD Selector of the Western Cape Provincial Library Service.

