2660-119-000-036.mp3

Producer [00:00:03] This is sound roll 36. It's the 25th of March, 1992 for Channel 13 WNET Travels Le Mal D'Afrique project nuber 401. Sound roll 36. Turns at neg eight.

Producer [00:00:31] And the next slate is 3-6-8.

Crew Member [00:00:33] I'll take a measure. Okay. Okay.

John Heminway [00:00:38] Conversation. Okay.

Crew Member [00:00:39] Action, any time.

John Heminway [00:00:41] Okay. Action. Well, extraordinary place. See. Yeah. [background sound] So it's just in here.

Speaker 2 [00:01:10] yeah, this is the main.

Crew Member [00:01:10] Okay.

Producer [00:01:10] [break in tape] 6-9.

Crew Member [00:01:11] Okay. Sorry.

John Heminway [00:01:17] Okay, remind me, this is about 100 feet along here. And, um.

Producer [00:01:22] Okay.

John Heminway [00:01:23] Are you ready? So Peter, remind me, this is about 100 feet of these hominid tracks that go all the way down this this corridor.

Crew Member [00:01:35] woah, woah [laughter] Yeah. You walk.

Producer [00:01:37] 3-70 coming up.

Crew Member [00:01:41] Okay. Right now.

John Heminway [00:01:49] Yes. So it's it's about a hundred feet from that end, to that end, all the way up there. And this is these are the footprints all the way under here.

Peter [00:01:57] Yeah. Both trails are buried under about a foot of sand, plastic sheeting, and then these rocks on top. And that was done 12 years ago now.

John Heminway [00:02:06] Good gosh. Do you think this is really going to protect the footprints?

Peter [00:02:10] Well, it's never designed as it was never designed as protection to last this long. And frankly, if you look at these bushes and you think about the root system that they must have, I'm a little bit worried. So at some point, you know, something will have to be done about checking to see what sort of shape the prints are in now.

John Heminway [00:02:29] This happens to be one of the least known major hominid sites in the world, isn't it? Nobody comes here. No visitor comes here. Only the Maasai.

Peter [00:02:37] In terms of visitors, yeah. And they're probably only about seven people that can actually find the site. But it's but in you know, it's it's an archeological record in terms of when it was discovered and how quickly it's all been done and published. And now.

John Heminway [00:02:52] That's great. Right off we go.

Peter [00:02:56] Onward.

Crew Member [00:03:06] Yes. Okay. Well,.

Producer [00:03:12] 3-70 on the end.

Crew Member [00:03:14] Step down a couple more steps. All right. That's far enough. Thank you. Are you ready?

John Heminway [00:03:32] We're ready.

Crew Member [00:03:32] Okay. Roll sound. Camera's ready. Action. [background sound]

Producer [00:04:32] And here's some wild track atmos for 3-7-2. Take one, mute front board. 600 mill lens shots. [background sound]

Producer [00:06:00] And this is a wild track to cover the 600 mill lens shots of Peter and John walking up through the cows. [background sound]

Crew Member [00:06:50] Cut.

Producer [00:06:51] Two, take two. [background sound]

Producer [00:08:00] Cut. And that atmos is also good for shots on 3-7-3. Take one, mute front board. And here's annother wild track atmos. This time it's for 3-7-4. Take one, mute front board. [background sound].

Producer [00:09:37] Cut. Wild track of wildebeest. [background sound]

Producer [00:10:53] Here comes a take two. There's a few more of them, but it's more distant perspective. [background sound]

Producer [00:12:42] It's the following day. Now it's the 26th of March. 3-7-7 next slate. [background sound].

Peter [00:12:58] Okay. Look at that. Little, little waterhole that they've been drinking.

John Heminway [00:13:06] It seems we're just on the edge of the woodland here, plains right out there on the left right now. And they've probably come in this morning.

Peter [00:13:14] Yeah. And it looks like, looks like it rained here a couple of days ago. And this could be a herd of a couple of hundred thousand strong that are just moving in. The

grazing is really good and there are these little waterholes within. Of course, they need to drink regularly. Oh.

John Heminway [00:13:31] What's the matter.

Crew Member [00:13:31] Run runoff.

Producer [00:13:34] 3-7-8 coming up.

John Heminway [00:13:38] So back to the numbers. I'll talk about the numbers. Okay.

Crew Member [00:13:46] Rolling.

John Heminway [00:13:48] Do you think we're seeing, what, just a couple of hundred right in here?

Peter [00:13:51] Yeah, wildebeests.

John Heminway [00:13:54] And this is probably just the the vanguard of a group that could be a hundred thousand right here.

Peter [00:14:00] Yeah. What, what happens very often once the wildebeest around the Serengeti is that they'll, the, the main group or the, the, the total, that migrate, about one and a half million of them, will split up into many small groups and they'll follow individual rainshowers. It's really spread themselves out over the, over the plains. Following up on the best grazing and of course, keeping near a little waterholes like these.

John Heminway [00:14:25] It's extraordinary how the size of the migration is increased. When I first came out here in the early sixties, there were only about 600,000, allegedly, wildebeest moving along. Now they're one and a half million and they've been up as high, I understand is 2 million. And then you had the zebra two that three or 400,000 zebra in front of the wildebeest moving along. You have a tremendous migration. Would, what could stop that. We could we could put the pressure on those numbers now? Or nothing?

Peter [00:14:58] Well, no, it's, it boils down to good amounts of grazing and then, you know, avoiding disease and things like rinderpest or foot and mouth. Which is what seem to be the main controlling factors in the past. The Serengeti is just perfect wildebeest habitat, which is why numbers can get as large as they do. And the other great survival factor that the wildebeest has over, say, zebra, for example, is that the females will all have their young within two weeks of each other. And so there's a sudden glut on the market of baby wildebeest. And just about every lion, hyena, leopard, cheetah will eat a baby wildebeest or two. And this gives all the others a chance to find their running legs. And within a day or two of being born, baby wildebeest can run incredibly fast.

John Heminway [00:15:54] It's amazing isn't it?

Peter [00:15:54] And it gives them a tremendous survival advantage over any other species in the area.

John Heminway [00:16:03] Somehow the migration has a, an effect on the human on human emotions. I mean, the sight of one and a half million animals moving across this great plain so unusual in the world, there are only two or three migrations like this in the

world, but nothing as spectacular as the Serengeti. And it seems to me that it has a human appeal that may be older than we think.

Peter [00:16:30] It could be. It certainly does have a human appeal in it, and it's sort of a basic survival level. Certainly. The the Wakuria [sic] who live over on the western side of the Serengeti, have always traditionally used the migration, wait, indeed waited for the migration to come by every year and hunted, hunted the game as as they pass through their area.

John Heminway [00:16:54] Just like the Lions do here.

Peter [00:16:56] Yeah. In a sense. And in the past the migration must have been an incredible time of plenty for early hominins living on the plains. Interestingly enough, of course, all the all the carnivores we got out on the plains today in and around the plains are territorial. They've got an area where there's permanent water, where they can live all year round, but then they'll move out onto the plains, into sort of extended home ranges when the wildebeest and zebra are there. So they can make use of this of this resource. What we don't have out here today is a migratory predator or a migratory scavenger.

John Heminway [00:17:34] Which we did have at one. Point.

Peter [00:17:35] Which we did have at one point. But that's what fascinates me. That was ourselves, a million years ago. And we have, we've left that niche behind and it's kind of sitting there open.

John Heminway [00:17:49] Is that why you and I come back to the Serengeti every year? Just about.

Peter [00:17:52] I think so. It's, it's, it's a migration for us isn't it.

John Heminway [00:17:55] Yeah, of course. Lets just drive off and see if we can find a big, the big bunch up here.

Producer [00:18:06] And cut. 3-7-9 coming up.

Crew Member [00:18:14] Sorry.

John Heminway [00:18:14] We want to do a front board.

Crew Member [00:18:16] Okay. We're rolling now.

Peter [00:18:18] We go. Right?

John Heminway [00:18:19] You've got a front board. Oh, this is great.

Crew Member [00:18:26] Go slow.

John Heminway [00:18:32] God, the old maribus [sic] are out,.

Peter [00:18:34] Yeah.

John Heminway [00:18:35] I have to tell you that somehow I feel far more relaxed out on the plains than I do in the woodland. I don't know why it is, but on the Serengeti, you want these plains. You feel better?

Peter [00:18:48] Yes, you can. You can see what's coming. You can see what's way off there. When you're walking through the bush land you're never quite sure what's on the other side of that thicket.

John Heminway [00:18:58] You think it's atavistic? Do you think it's. It goes back to this primordial memory of, of man. We remember our place on the savanna.

Peter [00:19:09] Definitely. I think. I think a lot of our, what a lot of people like to call intuition, a lot of our gut reactions to things. A lot of those feelings are, in fact, our instincts and they're their survival instincts that, that had more of a value then than they do now. Quite often people try and squash those things in themselves now, but they're they're an important, essential part of us.

John Heminway [00:19:34] How many wildebeest there are out here right now.

Peter [00:19:38] What, in this group, or the Serengeti?

John Heminway [00:19:40] No, not in the Serengeti. But I in here. What do you think about.

Peter [00:19:43] We're looking at.

John Heminway [00:19:43] Five, six, hundred?

Peter [00:19:44] Yeah. Maybe it's closer to a thousand.

John Heminway [00:19:50] Why don't we. Do we want to head over there and just have a closer look.

Peter [00:19:52] Okay. Let's just

John Heminway [00:19:54] Okay. Just go along slowly.

Producer [00:19:56] Wild track, follows.

Crew Member [00:19:58] I'm so sorry.

Producer [00:19:58] Wild track follows.

John Heminway [00:20:02] Peter, you know, I've got to tell you something that I never get bored of the Serengeti migration. I think that I, as a visitor to Africa, have come back here. Oh, I've seen this maybe 20 times. Perhaps. You, obviously, have see it probably 20 times a year, but I just never get bored of it. I find new things to discover every year. I feel, and I love the sight of one and a half million animals crossing a, a great plain. I'm stunned by the activities of predators. And yet, on top of all that. I've got to say that I feel absolutely and totally comfortable on the Serengeti Plains, like I feel nowhere else in the world. And I think that's true of a lot of people.

Peter [00:20:46] Yeah. I'm I take people out on safari all the time. And there's no doubt that the Serengeti is a totally different environment to what they're used to. It's quite often the natural habitat of my clients is the New York apartment and, and yet they'll go get out here and quite often they'll be camping for the first time. They'll be doing many, many things for the first time. It's amazing how well they're able to take it. It's amazing how good they feel. And they're they're amazed. They're really impressed with themselves. And, and within, within a few days, they're trying to figure out how to how to come back, how to stay longer, how to, how to make Africa a more important part of their lives. There's something, something about it that just seems right to people no matter where they come from. Um, and I think that it's, it's something to do with our, our distant past. This is sort of our environment. Something about having your feet more on the ground and being, once again, part of nature. Because it wasn't, wasn't that long ago that we were an important part of the ecosystem. And now we've, we've kind of, I don't want to say left it behind, because that implies a kind of progression, but we're out of it. When we're no longer a part of it, we find ourselves on the outside looking into it. And yet, deep down, we, we should, we should be more of a part of it.

John Heminway [00:22:16] But what kind of bothers me is that. The discovery of what you've just said is available on, sadly, only a very small group of people in the world. I think that if it was available to a lot more people, we would perhaps be a wiser and greater. A greater population. You know, I'm just sad that that only the usually the very rich can come out here and spend some time in a place like this and and make these extraordinary discoveries of the human psyche. In any case, to me, there's nothing quite like the Serengeti and I, I despair, if anything, would ever happened to it.

Peter [00:23:04] I think the Serengeti is pretty safe. It's a, in itself it's a, it's a very big, big area and attaches to the Maasai Mara in Kenya, connects the Ngorongoro Conservation Area down here. And so you're looking at, what, over 20,000 square kilometers of protected land, which includes the wildebeest and zebra migration. It includes a variety of habitats from cloud forests on Ngorongoro to the wide open plains that we're driving through and, huge areas of woodland, riverine woodland, rolling hills and so on. It's an area that's large enough for the vast majority of the species that we've got here, not just wildebeest and zebra.