

NORTHERN TAILS

Tales from the Top of the World

A children's wildlife "mocumentary"
web series that is serious (and
seriously silly) about nature



Logline

Presented in 10-minute character-driven episodes, *Northern Tails* is a series of educational shorts that uses puppets to explore how animals in the Boreal Forest interact with each other, their environment, northern people and the wider world.



WATCH THE DEMO



Synopsis

Imagine if “Hinterland Who’s Who” and “The Muppets” had a baby. *Northern Tails* takes its cue from beloved classics, but with an original spin and timely environmental themes that makes facts fun with zany characters, physical comedy and amusing plot twists.

Over each 10-minute episode, Russell Perry, a ground squirrel and documentary filmmaker, tells stories of iconic wildlife and ecosystems in the Boreal Forest. Russell is a consummate observer and his subjects are rarely aware of his presence. Through his documentary lens, we eavesdrop on their lives, learning about them, the forest and how they relate to us. As ground squirrels, Russell and his crew encounter calamity (and danger) in every one of their shoots, keeping the audience informed and always entertained.

Each episode wraps up with a “field guide” segment that highlights key facts about each species and directs audiences to a website for more online learning and engagement.



Audiences

CHILDREN

Our target audience is children aged 6-11 an age where kids seek independent knowledge, but physical humor is still appreciated.

PARENTS

Subtle references and the overall retro aesthetic will trigger nostalgia for parents aged 35-50.

CONTENT SURFERS

The overall production value and the unique presentation of this series is intended to catch the eye of content surfers looking for new things to watch online.





Comparables

The original inspiration for this series came from *Storm & Tinde*, a Swedish short that used puppets to explain the natural history of arctic foxes. But we wanted to go beyond a basic narration and hear from the animals themselves, so we drew from the shows we loved from our own childhoods — *The Muppet Show*, *Fraggle Rock*, and contemporary animated films like *Surf's Up* and *Penguins of Madagascar*. We capped it off with a nod to the wildlife documentaries that we all love - from *Wild Kingdom* to *Blue Planet* (or pretty much anything by David Attenborough) - and how they inform and inspire us about our natural world.



Tone

Northern Tails is a high-spirited series that is informative and amusing. It's quirky, sure, but it's also heartwarming and inspiring in a way that makes us all see how we can be better neighbours. The dialogue and character interactions add playful elements that make the facts (slap)stick.



Style

Education meets imagination with a throwback production style that is a nod to simpler times and science basics.

The digital shorts are filmed in a studio using constructed sets that combine hand-painted backgrounds and natural and felted props to create a soft, whimsical environment.

The puppets are designed with materials you could find in a kid's dress-up trunk, embellished with accessories that accent their biological personality traits — nerdy glasses, fanciful flowers, frosted tips!

Sound is important to our story. We mix the natural soundscape of the Boreal Forest with comedic audio cues and a retro soundtrack that will connect with parents and the Tik-Tok generation.



Themes

Learning is fun! Knowledge is power! These educational shorts show how northern animals interact with each other, their environment, people and the wider world, but without being overly serious. Through the series we'll learn:

WHO LIVES IN THE BOREAL FOREST?

We'll learn about the most important species in the Boreal Forest and what role they play in their community.

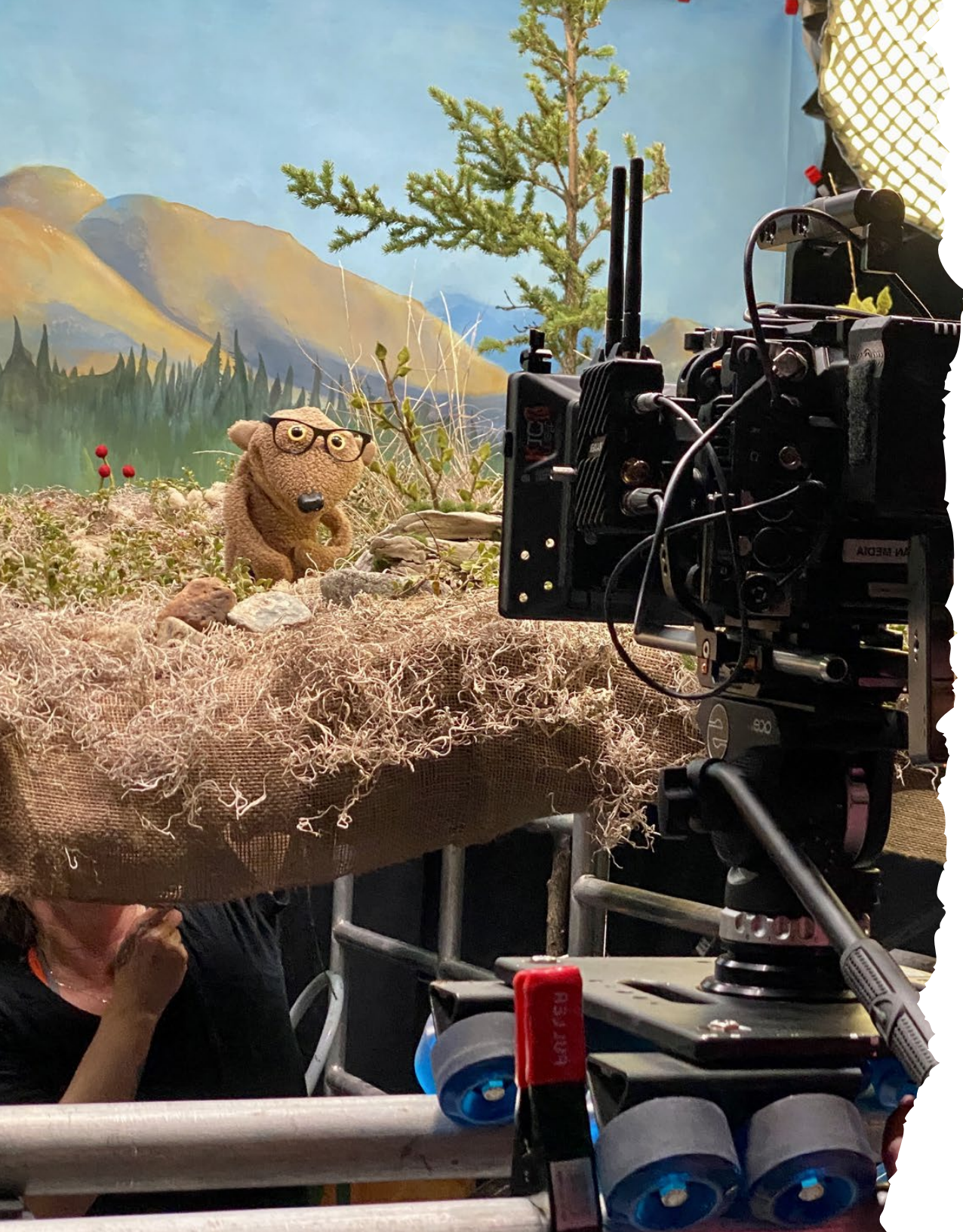
WHY IS THE BOREAL FOREST IMPORTANT?

Everyone knows about the Arctic, but the swampy muskeg and thick forests of the boreal — while not as photogenic — are true superstars of the planet's health.

HOW IS THE BOREAL FOREST CHANGING?

Shifts in climate and increased human development are making things different for animals and plants of the Boreal Forest. How (and if) they adapt is important to all of us.





Concept

Wildlife documentaries are a family favourite. They are a great way to learn about our natural world but they are usually very serious and sometimes even unsettling for younger children.

Using friendly puppets and a “mockumentary” format, *Northern Tails* is crafted to capture the hearts and minds of curious kids with an age-appropriate approach to learning.

As each episode eavesdrops on the lives of the characters, a narrative unfolds and science becomes a subtle subplot. In the end, the audience can relate to the story and understand more about important eco—connections in the real world.

Setting

Did you know that the Boreal Forest is bigger than the Amazon?!! With a billion acres across Northern Canada, crawling with thousands of creatures (and very few people) and streaming with the most surface freshwater in the world, the boreal ecosystem is a super-influencer for the health of the entire planet. As we explore this vast land with a motley crew of characters, we can learn what our wild neighbours do for us and what they need to survive.



Characters

Meet the cast (and crew) of *Northern Tails!* They all play important roles in the Boreal Forest. Each character is developed using key biological and behavioral characteristics of the species, and a dash of pop culture references to make them relatable and fun.



Russell

ARCTIC GROUND SQUIRREL



Winston

COMMON RAVEN



Isabelle

WOODLAND CARIBOU



Bruno

WOLF



Lou

BEAVER



Jackie

WOLVERINE

HE'S COOL! WHEN HE SLEEPS,
HE HAS THE LOWEST BODY
TEMPERATURE IN THE WORLD

SLEEPING IS HIS SUPERPOWER!
HE CAN HIBERNATE LIKE NO ONE'S BUSINESS

GOOD EYESIGHT IS KEY AS HE'S ALWAYS
ON THE LOOKOUT - ESPECIALLY FOR PREDATORS

HE PREFERS TO EAT SEEDS AND PLANTS,
BUT HE'S NOT A PICKY EATER

PRACTICAL COAT OF
SOFT GREY OR BROWN FUR
- NOTHING FANCY

HIS NERVOUS GIGGLE LETS FRIENDS
KNOW WHEN TROUBLE IS COMING

HIS TAIL TELLS ALL
AND GIVES AWAY HIS
TRUE FEELINGS.



Russell

ARCTIC GROUND SQUIRREL DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER

Thanks for tuning in to *Northern Tails!* I'm your host, Russell Perry. I love my home here in Canada's Boreal Forest. Most people don't know that it's one of the biggest forests on the planet - but we all should! Because what happens here in The Boreal - with all the creatures and plants and weather - affects everyone in the world. I promise you that I am a dedicated professional. I will use my sharpest observational skills and courageous crew of ground squirrels to bring you the top stories (and nature's little secrets) from the top of the world.

“ LIGHTS! CAMERA! DANG IT!! ”

Russell and his crew try to film the opening scene of their new nature documentary series, but there are technical difficulties, and the wildlife keeps acting up. Russell begins to realize he's got his work cut out for him.



Winston

COMMON RAVEN
UNDEREMPLOYED

Hey, man. Winston here. Some call me “Win—man”. Or the “Winstonator.” Or just “Raven”. Yah. I kind of like that one. You can usually find me hanging around. Sometimes literally. You know. I’ll just hang there. From a tree. You can see a lot from there. Helps to keep tabs on who’s up to what. I used to run with this big gang. We got into trouble, sure. But now they’re all pairing up — finding their soulmate or whatever. For me, I have a longstanding relationship with fun and games. You know what I mean? The Raven abides...

“ HANG TEN ”

Winston is going to a baby shower for one of his old gang members when he catches some big wind and starts riding the gusts. His friend catches him and starts to lecture but can’t resist the fun in his acrobatics.



HE'S A RISK TAKER AND LIKES TO HAVE FUN -
MOSTLY BECAUSE HE'S BORED

ONE OF THE MOST INTELLIGENT ANIMALS
IN THE FOREST (BUT HE'S MAYBE TOO SMART)

LEFT HIS FAMILY AS A TEENAGER TO JOIN
A ROWDY GANG. BUT HE'S OVER IT

HE'S A BIG TALKER AND
CAN EVEN IMITATE HUMAN SPEECH

HE'S NOT ABOVE TRYING STIMULANTS



A.M.S. (AFRAID OF MISSING SOMETHING)
WHATEVER IS GOING ON,
SHE WANTS TO KNOW ABOUT IT

SHE GROWS NEW ANTLERS EVERY YEAR,
UNLIKE HER OTHER DEER
FAMILY COUSINS

SHOES FOR EVERY OCCASION!
HOOVES HELP HER WALK ON SNOW,
GRIP ICE, SWIM AND DIG

LONG LASHES PROTECT
HER EYES FROM
DUST AND SNOW

NEED FOR SPEED!
IF SHE'S IN DANGER,
SHE CAN SPRINT
UP TO 50 KMS/HOUR

HER SLEEK COAT CHANGES
WITH THE SEASONS

Isabelle

WOODLAND CARIBOU
INFLUENCER AND FASHION BLOGGER

Hi. I'm Isabelle. You've probably seen me before. I'm kind of a big thing here in the Boreal Forest. I've got a reputation for getting myself into exciting situations. Like the time I crashed that big dinner party at Bruno's. I mean, I'm sure they just forgot to send me an invite. But seriously, let's talk about bad habits! Humans are totally cramping my style these days. So rude! But they shouldn't underestimate me. I'm getting loads of new followers all the time — even outside my herd — and we plan on influencing the future.

“ A DODGED BULLET ”

Isabelle and some of her followers are heading to check out a new place to eat when they see a strange shape crouching in the forest. They decide to go see what it is but get distracted by a gang of ravens and avoid potential disaster.



MEET ISABELLA



Bruno

TIMBER WOLF FAMILY MAN AND RESTAURATEUR

Hey. Bruno here. I'm an upstanding citizen of the Boreal Forest. Some call me the boss. I run a nice establishment. A little fine dining. A little entertainment. Laura, my wife, she knows classy. You should come check it out. We keep things respectable. Not like that mook, Moose. He was crashing around the other day. I told him to tone it down with all the rutting. If not, he's going to have a problem. And you don't want a problem with me. Me and the family, we like to keep everything in line. We keep order. We run this country...

“ FRIENDS NOT FOOD ”

Bruno and Laura are having a serious conversation about their oldest son, Primo. He's just told them he's now a vegetarian and the parents are trying to work out what this means for the family.



HE'S A GREAT SINGER.
WITH THE REST OF THE PACK BACKING HIM UP

HE'S GOT AN EXCELLENT SENSE OF SMELL
(100X BETTER THAN HUMANS)

LIVES WITH HIS FAMILY AND
THEY ALL WORK TOGETHER.

SHAGGY FUR COAT
- A CLASSIC

LONG TEETH ARE
TOOLS FOR EATING



DEDICATED BUILDER ALWAYS
LOOKING FOR THEIR NEXT PROJECT

THEY NEED TO WORK ON
THEIR ORAL HYGIENE

HAS A HABIT OF NIBBLING ON ANY
NEARBY WOOD - ESPECIALLY
WHEN THEY ARE THINKING

THEIR MASSIVE TAIL
IS A GREAT TOOL
FOR BUILDING

COULD STAND TO
LOSE A FEW
POUNDS

Lou

BEAVER
CIVIL ENGINEER

Hey ho! Lou's the name. So happy to show you around so you can see everything we're working on here in the Boreal Forest. I just put a new berm by the dam over there. Wasn't sure if it'd stop that leak, but the backfill gave it some real good structure and we should have some new pools for folks to start moving into shortly. Everyone needs a place to live, you know. It makes me proud to see how this work is bringing our community together.

“ DISLODGED ”

Lou is trying to catch a bit of R&R when there is a leak in the dam. They leap to action, pulling out blueprints and figuring out the best solution to the problem.



Jackie

WOLVERINE

WASTE MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONAL

Yah. I'm Jackie. Who's asking, anyway? Listen, don't get defensive. And don't give me attitude because I guarantee you can't handle mine. I really don't have time for this small-talk. I've got stuff to do. For me. There are some things I've been wanting lately. Like maybe a kid. Crazy, I know. But you get what you focus on, so focus on what you want - that's my motto. And I'm not asking for hearts and rainbows and all that garbage. Being alone doesn't mean I'm lonely. It means I can handle things myself.

“ TOUGH LOVE ”

Jackie is looking for love. She's considering the local options but while the odds are good for her, the goods might be a bit odd and she always seems to fall for the wrong guy...



MEET JACKIE



QUITE POSSIBLY THE TOUGHEST ANIMAL IN THE FOREST

HER MASSIVE CLAWS ARE PERFECT FOR DIGGING AND TEARING THINGS APART

SHE'S IN CONTROL OF HER OWN BODY AND CAN DELAY PREGNANCY UNTIL A BETTER TIME

SHE'S CAN'T RESIST THE SMELL OF A MALE WOLVERINE

THICK, GLOSSY HAIR WITH A DISTINCT BLOND STREAK



Crew

ELENORE - Production Assistant

MARCUS - Camera Assistant

KENNY - Sound Operator

The ground squirrels on the *Northern Tails* film crew are dedicated, but a bit skittish because everything wants to eat them! — especially golden eagles. As crew members regularly disappear from the set, Russell has to train new ones. But these are the perils of documentary filmmaking and fortunately there seems to be a never-ending supply of squirrels who are up for the task.





Supporting Cast

BOB

Like most grizzly bears, Bob likes to move through life without too much fuss. He eats whatever, sleeps whenever, and poops wherever. Just as long as it's in the woods...

EAGLE

When it comes to silently stalking his next meal from the air, he's a serial offender. But don't judge him, it's just part of his nature.

MOUSE

She might be tiny, but Mouse is one of the best gardeners in the forest, scattering seeds far and wide. Just be careful not to step on her. She can pop up anywhere.

SUN

This guy is HOT. Wherever he goes, he heats things up and gets a party going. But even with his fun-loving attitude he's absolutely reliable and always on time.

WATER

Water is everywhere. She's a nurturing soul, always trying to be helpful even if it means changing herself to make someone else happy. We would be wise not to take her kindness for granted.

WIND

Super temperamental and unpredictable, wind can be very disruptive. He never really gets invited out and when he does, things seem to cool off or dry up when he's around. Overall, he's pretty annoying.

Creators

Kelly Milner *Producer, Writer, Director*

Kelly is an award-winning writer, director and producer from Whitehorse. A trained journalist, she likes to focus on stories that explore issues and ideas that matter. She has directed and produced two multiple award-winning short documentaries (*SHIFT* and *Camera Trap*). She has just completed her first feature documentary, *Not About Me*.

www.shotinthedarkmedia.com

Bob Hayes *Writer, Science Consultant*

Bob Hayes is a writer and a biologist who worked his entire career in the Boreal Forest studying wolves, birds, moose and caribou, and how they all connect. After working as a biologist for almost 30 years, Bob turned to writing and has now published four books all focused on the North and the interactions between humans and wildlife.

www.bobhayesyukon.com



Creators

Moria Sauer *Producer/ Writer,*

Moria has an arts degree and an extensive background in theatre. Before moving to the Yukon, Moria lived in New York and was a member of a puppeteering company, Superior Concept Monsters. Upon moving to the Yukon, she established and ran Sour Brides Theatre company. She has recently turned her focus to film and media production. Her award-winning comedic short film, *The Provider*, was screened at Cannes and several international festivals.

Amy Lennon *Executive Producer /Digital Media*

After graduating from journalism school, Amy worked as an interactive producer at Knowledge Network and senior producer for Cinecoup Media where she created digital funding platforms for the CineCoup Film Accelerator, TELUS Storyhive and CBC ComedyCoup. She was the Digital Producer for Shot in the Dark's *Not About Me* documentary.
www.amylennon.com





Production

Alex Chan Director of Photography

Donald Watt Production Designer / Puppeteer

Sam Fleming Camera Assistant / Puppeteer

Annie Johnsgaard Production Assistant /Puppeteer

Moria Saur Puppeteer

Dave Haddock Puppeteer

Isidore Champagne Set Photographer

Tara Kolla Props Master

Tedd Tucker Russell's Tail

Post-Production

Dave Hamelin Editor

Sam Fleming Assistant Editor

Tedd Tucker Designer / Illustrator

Moira Sauer Voice of Russell, Jackie, Lou & Laura

Juliet Crowe Voice of Isabelle

Douglas Sauer Voice of Winston & Bruno

Daniel Ashley Intro Composer

Northern Tails Digital

There's more to see and do on *the Northern Tails* website. Explore the site to find out more about the Boreal Forest and all our new friends.



WATCH IT AGAIN!

Because it's always fun to watch it again (and again), the website will host the series episodes in a branded video player.



LEARN MORE!

Presented as a virtual field guide, kids can visit each character's web page to learn more about their habitats, personalities, development, diets and their biological superpowers.



DO STUFF!

- Click to print a colouring activity
- Press play to listen to how the animals communicate
- Scroll through photo and video galleries
- Test your knowledge to win badges and other cool stuff

[VIEW THE WIREFRAMES](#)



Company Profile

Shot in the Dark is a Yukon-based media and communications company that creates meaningful impact through storytelling. Our work includes documentary and scripted film productions as well as client projects that integrate strategy, content development, marketing, events and interactive multimedia. We focus on projects that can shed light on new ideas that can help shift perspectives and open minds.

Learn about our work at shotinthedarkmedia.com



SHOT IN THE DARK
PRODUCTIONS



Find out more at

shotinthedarkmedia.com/northern-tails

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