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***Nature* premieres *Magic of the Snowy Owl*, Wednesday, October 24, 2012, on PBS**

A pair of snowy owls struggles to raise a family in the unforgiving Arctic.

Throughout the long months of the Arctic's frozen winter the sun remains below the horizon. The cold is intensified by the darkness, making life here difficult, if not impossible, for all but the toughest and most experienced of animals. Snowy owls are built for the challenge, their every sense and skill honed to take on the eerie, bleak world. And when the brief Arctic summer approaches, bringing light back to the tundra, they embark upon an even more daunting challenge than keeping themselves alive. They breed and attempt to raise young in one of the harshest environments on the planet. Once summer arrives, they will have just 82 days of sunlight to successfully raise a family of helpless owlets until they are ready and able to fly.

Nature reveals the ingenuity and majestic prowess of the snowy owl in ***Magic of the Snowy Owl***, premiering Wednesday, October 24, 2012, at 8 p.m. (ET) on PBS (check local listings). After broadcast, the series will stream online at pbs.org/nature.

Nature is a production of THIRTEEN in association with WNET, the parent company of THIRTEEN and WLIW21, New York's public television stations and operator of NJTV. For 50 years, THIRTEEN has been making the most of the rich resources and passionate people of New York and the world, reaching millions of people with on-air and online programming that celebrates arts and culture, offers insightful commentary on the news of the day, explores the worlds of science and nature, and invites students of all ages to have fun while learning.

One of the largest owl species in the world, "snowies" weigh an average of 5-6 pounds and can grow to a remarkable 27 inches tall, with a wingspan of 5 feet. They are powerful and deadly hunters, equipped with lethal talons and enough stamina to fly for miles while hunting. Their

piercing golden eyes come armed with unique telescopic vision capable of locking on to prey from great distances, even in poor light. They need every skill they can muster to survive.

Nature follows a team of filmmakers who set out to document the rarely observed daily lives of a breeding pair of snowy owls in their natural habitat. Local experts provide them with leads on where they should focus their search, but their prospects look poor from the start. Breeding pairs are all but absent, and the possibility that there aren't enough lemmings this year to support an owl family is cause for concern. The success of any year's breeding depends on the availability of prey to feed the young, and lemming numbers are notoriously unpredictable. Still, the team is lucky enough to find a single breeding pair with five owlets in the nest, trying to make a go of it despite the unusually difficult year. Anything could happen.

The nest is on the ground, vulnerable to predators like wolves and polar bears, so the female stays on the nest, keeping the owlets warm and protected while the male heads out to catch something for them to eat. They have not all hatched on the same day, but one at a time, a few days apart. The firstborn is the largest; the last, the smallest. Their sizes matter to their survival, as the biggest, strongest owlets are always in position to be fed first. And food is scarce. The male must travel farther and search longer each day to find even the smallest offerings. Even the weather has taken a turn for the worse – fog rolls in. In the end, it's all too much, or too little, for the youngest owlet.

When the male finally returns with a bounty of lemmings for the family, it's a race to make up for lost time. The little family goes on the move in an effort to place themselves closer to the food source, closer to each meal the male flies back and forth to provide. Not yet able to fly, the owlets travel by foot, waddling across the tundra, taking tumbles as they go. The film crew is uprooted and must come up with a new, more mobile camouflaged camera hide to keep up with the action. Rainstorms arrive, as well as a plague of mosquitoes.

For the crew, all this effort pays off in a big way. As the whole family of owls moves closer to the coast, the owlets are faced with an unusual challenge – they must cross a river. It's easy enough to do if you can fly, but these owlets haven't fledged yet. And the cameras are there to record four little owlets "swimming" across the water, something never recorded or filmed before.

Now all that remains is for the owlets to fledge. They must fly south before the sun drops again below the horizon. They will not be strong enough to survive an Arctic winter until they are grown. But their bravery and perseverance have already been demonstrated. Their determination is a defining trait of their kind, and they do take to the sky as the long polar day comes to an end. Their parents have been remarkably successful, raising four owlets in a difficult year, demonstrating magic and magnificence of their own.

Nature is a production of THIRTEEN in association with WNET for PBS. Fred Kaufman is executive producer. ***Magic of the Snowy Owl*** is a Terra Mater Factual Studios GmbH & Nature Conservation Channel Ltd. production in co-production with THIRTEEN.

Nature pioneered a television genre that is now widely emulated in the broadcast industry. Throughout its history, **Nature** has brought the natural world to millions of viewers. The series has been consistently among the most-watched primetime series on public television.

Nature has won more than 600 honors from the television industry, the international wildlife film communities, and environmental organizations including 10 Emmys, three Peabodys and the first award given to a television program by the Sierra Club. The series received two of wildlife film industry's highest honors: the Christopher Parsons Outstanding Achievement Award given by the Wildscreen Festival and the Grand Teton Award given by the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival. Recently, Fred Kaufman was named the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award for Media by the 2012 International Wildlife Film Festival.

PBS.org/nature is the award-winning web companion to **Nature**, featuring streaming episodes, filmmaker interviews, teacher's guides, and more.

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About WNET

New York's WNET is America's flagship public media outlet, bringing quality arts, education and public affairs programming to over 5 million viewers each week. The parent company of public television stations [THIRTEEN](#) and [WLIW21](#) and operator of [NJTV](#), WNET produces and presents such acclaimed PBS series as [Nature](#), [Great Performances](#), [American Masters](#), [Need to Know](#), [Charlie Rose](#) and a range of documentaries, children's programs, and local news and cultural offerings available on air and online. Pioneers in educational programming, WNET has created such groundbreaking series as [Get the Math](#), [Oh Noah!](#) and [Cyberchase](#) and provides tools for educators that bring compelling content to life in the classroom and at home. WNET highlights the tri-state's unique culture and diverse communities through [NYC-ARTS](#), [Reel 13](#), [NJ Today](#) and the new online newsmagazine [MetroFocus](#).