

Nature's Greatest Moments - Asian Shorts

12 x 5 MINUTES

EPISODIC BREAKDOWN

1. Monitor Lizard

On Java the monitor's place in the food chain comes below great mammal predators: the tiger and the leopard. But opportunity lies elsewhere. Volcanic activity has caused new islands to be born; the new rainforests team with bird and insect life. Here, the monitor lizard can be king.

2. Komodo Dragon

The landscapes of the planet have been in flux for millions of years. Changing coastlines have caused the mass migration of many species. The Komodo dragon is one of nature's refugees, swept up millions of years ago on a remote Indonesian island. In this predator-free environment the reptile would evolve into the world's biggest lizard.

3. Fijian Iguana

The Fijian crested iguana cannot swim or fly. Its nearest relative lives 12,000km away in central America: an unlikely distance for its ancestors to travel. The iguana's leathery eggs, programmed by nature to hatch only when environmental conditions are right, may hold the answer to this castaway's unlikely destination.

4. Fishing Cat

As night falls in the Asian rainforest, the senses of its inhabitants are finely tuned. Each animal has their own set of skills – for attack and for defence. There is no better specialist in the rainforest than the fishing cat, and as an unsuspecting eel approaches the side of the pond she prepares to strike.

5. Snow Leopard

Only the very strongest can survive in the oxygen-deprived atmosphere of the Himalayans. Bharals, or blue sheep, are perfectly camouflaged for this terrain. They need to be, as they share environment with one of nature's most dangerous, but enigmatic, predators – the snow leopard.

6. Asian Tigers

Once tigers roamed much of the vast Asian continent. Their territory stretched from the frozen wastes of Siberia to the rainforests of Indonesia. In the last 100 years tigers have disappeared from 95% of their former range: less than 7,000 individuals exist in just 14 countries. Prized as game trophies and killed by threatened villagers, the future looks bleak for these magnificent cats.

7. Demoiselle Cranes

Every year Demoiselle cranes flies thousands of kilometres from their winter roosts in the temperate zones of India to summer breeding grounds in the grasslands of Mongolia. In this arid but beautiful region a mating pair incubates their egg throughout the summer. The season is changing and the cranes must be ready to make the long flight across the Himalayas back to India.

8. Gerbils, Jerboa, and Marmots

The barren landscape of the Great Gobi desert offers little protection from the searing daytime sun or the freezing nights. For the desert's small mammals there's only one place to go - underground. In the cool, dry subterranean darkness colonies of gerbils raise their young, one of the hundreds of generations to use the same underground caverns.

9. Mongolian Camels and Przewalski Horses

The Bactrian two-humped camel is perfectly adapted to its harsh environment on the Mongolian Plains. Their stores of fat allow them to live for up to ten days without water. But when they have the opportunity to replenish, these camels are fierce drinkers, consuming up to 114l in as little as ten minutes.

10. Macaques

Macaques are found throughout the Asian continent: from the snow-covered mountains of Japan to the rainforests of Indonesia. These monkeys are very intelligent and love to eat! From crabs to grasshoppers to fruit and figs, macaques will make a meal out of anything. And these social creatures also love to share, with a family meal often followed by a relaxing grooming session.

11. Orang-utan

Orang-utans are not a widespread species; their habitat covers only the Indonesian islands of Borneo and Sumatra. They have an intimate knowledge of their forest home, and are nature's great toolmakers. Orang-utan use twigs to coax the juicy termites from their tree trunk nests and when it rains they shelter under umbrellas made from palm leaves.

12. Langur

Langur are leaf-eating monkeys. A large population live among the forested cliffs close to the temple of the revered monkey god Hanuman. The summer may bring temperatures of up to 50C. The heat kills off all edible vegetation, but the monkeys around the temple are saved from starvation by worshippers who bring them nuts, fruit and vegetables.

