

Film & Video

An arbitrary, less than exhaustive list of films and TV series with environmental themes. In fact, it barely leaves its deep adjustable lounge chair with swing-up cushioned leg support, multiple cup holders, and pivot-arm remote control.

family-friendly = FF; **older children only** = FO; **for grown-ups** = GU;
post-apocalyptic = PO; **animated** = A; documentaries = D



All Creatures Great and Small (2 series, 90 episodes) FF

The adventures of a Yorkshire veterinary surgeon and his family in the 1930s, from James Herriot's heart-warming novels. Two series were made and a total of 90 episodes: 1978-80 and 1988-90. There's also a 1975 movie.



Avatar (2009) FO

James Cameron's baby. Weirdly, the second biggest grossing film in history (\$3B so far). The paradise of Pandora. Unobtainium, a rare mineral that's a room-temperature superconductor. A dying Sigourney Weaver, who forms a very different relationship with *these* aliens. Lots of cool critters. If you love it, you're in luck: Cameron has already shot Avatar 2 and 3, for release

around Christmas 2021 and 2023, with two more after that. By then, the forces of greed and armed repression will have been erased from the universe.



Bambi (1942) FF, A

Disney's fifth animation and by some estimates, the third best animated film of all time. What's it doing here among environmental films? Bambi's a mule deer, silly, Thumper's a rabbit, and Flower's a skunk.



Before the Flood (2016) FC

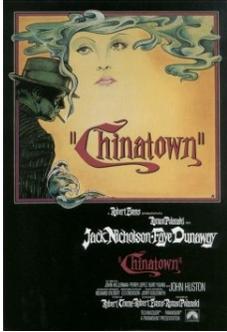
Award-winning documentary directed by Fisher Stevens, narrated and starring Leonardo DiCaprio, who together toured the world for three years finding evidence of global warming and its calamitous effects. The film highlights climate-change denial and offers a carbon tax as a partial solution.

Chernobyl miniseries (2019) FC

This HBO dramatization relates what happened on April 26, 1986 in reactor number four of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine, why it happened, and how the Soviet authorities made the situation so much worse—which, when it all came out at the trial, hastened the end of the USSR. "Vnimanije Vnimanije!" urged the loudspeakers on a truck, evacuating all 50,000 people from nearby Pripjat.

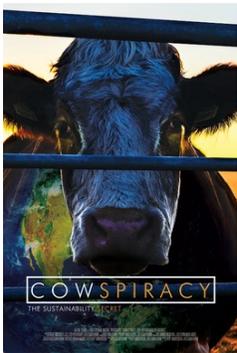
China Syndrome (1979) FO

Starring Jane Fonda as a local TV reporter and Jack Lemmon as an honest nuclear engineer. The movie singlehandedly killed the world's nuclear power industry — that and Three Mile Island, which happened shortly after the film opened.



Chinatown (1974) GU

Roman Polanski's masterpiece that involves urban versus rural water use and corruption in 1930s Los Angeles, from a Robert Towne script. With Faye Dunaway, Jack Nicholson, and the great John Huston as Noah Cross, one of the scariest, most despicable rich villains in film.



Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret (2019) GU

We know industrial farming is hard on the local environment; do we realize that it's the largest producer of greenhouse gases—51% by this documentary's accounting, but possibly only half that. High, in any case. Earnest, passionate, not entirely factual.

The Day After Tomorrow (2004) FO, PA

You know, the earth freezes (not likely, unless we're hit by four asteroids, which set off about five massive volcanoes). "Profoundly silly" sums up both critical and scientific reactions; the public loved it. It's on heavy cable rotation from Spectrum.

The Endurance (2000)

Shackleton's valiant, failed expedition to Antarctica in 1914 and how he and his crew survived, with new footage (as of 2000) of the actual locations.

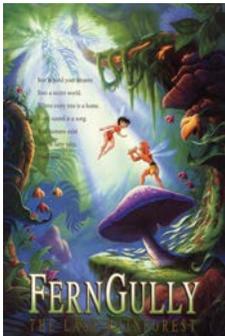


Erin Brockovich (2000)

Directed by Stephen Soderberg, starring Julia Roberts. Based on a true story about groundwater pollution from California public utility Pacific Gas & Electric. Now you can see the actual Erin Brockovich touting her personal-injury firm in TV ads.

Grizzly Man (2005)

Directed by Werner Herzog. About two grizzly bear activists who live among them seemingly at peace until they are suddenly killed. [more]



FernGully: The Last Rainforest (1992) FF, A

I Heart Huckabees (2004)

Directed by David O. Russell. With Dustin Hoffman, Lily Tomlin, Jude Law, Jason Schwartzman, Mark Wahlberg, Naomi Watts, and Isabelle Huppert. A screwball metaphysical comedy that starts when one character working for the Open Spaces Coalition tries stop yet another big-box chain store (Huckabees).

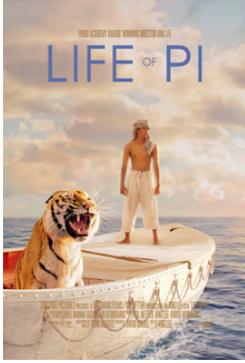
An Inconvenient Truth (2005) (+ 2017 sequel) FO

David Guggenheim, filmmaker. Al Gore's cohesive, visually stunning argument that our chances to change our ways and reduce greenhouse-gas emissions are both ever more urgent and narrowing. It jump-started the global movement against climate change that had stalled after years of PR assaults by the oil-and-gas industry.

Kon-Tiki (2012)

About Thor Heyrdahl's 1947 4,300-mile voyage across the Pacific on a balsawood raft with a small crew, proving that Polynesians could have followed wind and current to South America long before Europeans invaded the continent.

Koyaanisqatsi (1982)



Life of Pi (2012)

Director was Ang Lee, for which he won the Academy Award. A delight.

Living in the Future's Past (2019)

Jeff Bridges. CA wildfires. Susan Kusara. Asks but never answers the question, Why are we behaving this way? (It's what we are, a promising but ultimately failed species about to flunk out of existence?)



March of the Penguins [*La Marche de l'Empereur*] (2005)

The yearly journey of the Antarctic's Emperor penguins to breed, filmed by two French cinemaphotographers over the course of a year.

Oceans [*Océans*] (2009)

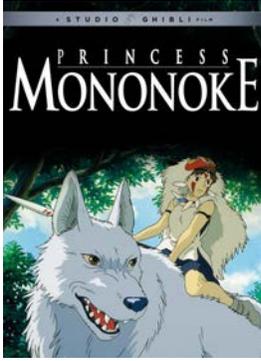
Pierce Brosnan, narrator. Directed, produced, co-written, and narrated by Jacques Perrin with Jacques Cluzaud as co-director. Shot in 50 locations in five oceans. A Disney documentary.

Our Planet Series (2019) 8 episodes. FF

The latest great nature series from producer Alastair Fothergill but this time for Netflix, not the BBC. Narrated by the iconic voice of nature documentaries, Richard Attenborough. And this time, there's no question of being lulled into complacency. The message is complicity. Writes Ed Yong of The Atlantic "It's bad. It's urgent. It's our fault. We can still fix it. *Our Planet* is a eulogy, a confession . . . a call to arms."

Soylent Green (1975) GU

In the year 2020—so soon!—scientists have solved the crisis of human hunger in a way only a detached, empathy-free rationalist could.



Princess Mononoke (1997) FF, A

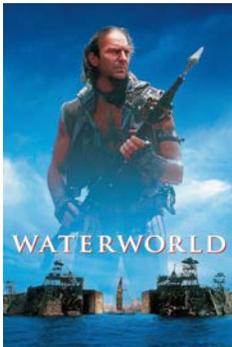
An environmental fable by Hayao Miyazaki, set in 14th century Japan, where the physical and spiritual worlds flow together seamlessly.

Walkabout (1971)

Nicholas Roeg, director. For many, this classic was the first glimpse of Australian Aboriginal culture, and it was stunning. Still is.

WALL-E (2008) FF, A

From Pixar. On a future uninhabited earth, a trash-compacting robot manages to find love when a probe comes to visit. (That sounds right, I haven't seen it.) It is widely considered one of the best films of 2008. *Time* magazine thought it the best film of the decade.

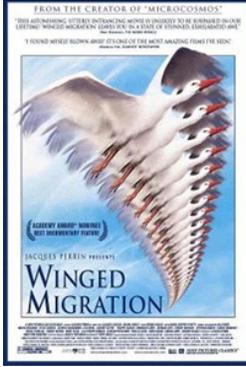


Waterworld (1995) FO, PA

Kevin Costner. Once hooted at, now a cult favorite ranked below only the **Mad Max** Trilogy. We like it ourselves. A touch implausible that the entire planet is drowned in up to 25,000 feet of water, but no matter. It's warm!

The White Diamond (2004)

Director Werner Herzog. Above the treetops of Guyana's virgin jungle by way of an innovative hot-air balloon. Destination: the magnificent Kaieteur Falls.



Winged Migration [*Le Peuple Migrateur*] (2001) FF, D

French documentary, though the filmmakers prefer the term "natural tale." Birds photographed in flight all over the world from small aircraft such as ultralights and paragliders, as well as trucks, boats, and remoted-controlled robots. No special effects involved for the birds.

World War Z (2013) PA, GU

With Brad Pitt. A big-budget pandemic thriller, also labeled by some a horror film. Pitt is terrific as a former UN official and family man drawn into the search for a cure. An echo of our times?



BBC NATURE DOCUMENTARY SERIES

the BBC's Natural History Unit has set a high bar since the 1950s. Some of its documentaries have become big hits; the British people continue to foot the bill for the others. We aren't grateful enough. Here are just a few highlights. Google "BBC Natural History Unit" for the complete list.

- **Blue Planet** (2001) 10 parts
- **Deep Blue** (2003), feature condensation of the Blue Planet series
- **Planet Earth** (2006) 11 parts
- **Frozen Planet** (2011) 7 parts
- **Atlantic: Wildest Ocean on Earth** (2015), 3 parts
- **Blue Planet II** (2016), 6 parts
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