

This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears above any article. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)

Turtle documentary explores bond between man, nature

Filmmaker David Weintraub drawing national attention with 'Call of the Ancient Mariner'

*By Beth Beasley De Bona
Times-News Staff Writer*

Published: Monday, June 1, 2015 at 12:30 p.m.

Sea turtles have been the subject of legends and origin stories, symbols of wisdom, in addition to being generally beloved by human cultures.

A new documentary by Henderson County filmmaker David Weintraub, "Call of the Ancient Mariner," details the human fascination with turtles as well as efforts to save the marine animal, faced with challenges in its natural habitat.

The film is getting attention at film festivals, most notably in Charleston, S.C., where it won Best of the Festival at the Terrace Charleston Film Festival in March.

"It's always exciting and a little bit scary to take a film you've been working on and put it on the silver screen," Weintraub said. "It's especially gratifying when it wins over the audience of film festivals on its first time out."

The first local screening of "Call of the Ancient Mariner" is set for 7 p.m. June 12 at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Hendersonville.

A screening on June 11 at the North Carolina Arboretum will begin at 6:30 p.m.

"In a way, this film really isn't about sea turtles at all, it's about us and how invested we should be in our natural surroundings," added Weintraub, who lives in Flat Rock and serves as executive director of the Center for Cultural Preservation.

A panel discussion on conservation in the mountains will follow the June 12 screening in Hendersonville.

"I'm look forward to not only showing the film to the home crowd, but to discussing the issues raised in the film that are so near and dear to my heart," Weintraub said.

The panel will be composed of Weintraub, CMLC Land Protection Director Tom Fanslow, MountainTrue Southern Regional Director Mark Steirwalt, and Terry Fansler of the Seabrook Island Turtle Patrol.

A DVD release party will follow the discussion, with music from the film performed by Carol Deurmit and Michele Skeele.

Skeele and Deurmit are two of the musicians from the area whose music is featured in the documentary.

"The hope is that it's not just entertainment," Weintraub said of the film. "It's in our



Mike Arendt / Special

David Weintraub films a loggerhead sea turtle aboard the Georgia Bulldog, a sea turtle expedition investigating the health of turtles in the ocean.

DNA to connect with nature.”

The common connections of cultures across the globe — both ancient and modern — to turtles are a big focus of the documentary, which runs about 85 minutes.

Weintraub made numerous trips in the past two years to South Carolina’s Seabrook Island, among other beaches, interviewing anyone having a professional or personal link to sea turtles.

“I spoke to sea turtle experts around the country, began talking to native tribal members around the world as well as archaeologists and sea turtle patrol members,” Weintraub said. “Hundreds if not thousands of cultures have a connection with turtles, and that’s inspiring.

“I thought to myself, what a fascinating way of telling the story of conservation — by focusing on our innate connection with these creatures throughout our history,” he added.

Dave Owens, a professor of biology at the University of Charleston, S.C., was one expert interviewed in the film.

“All kinds of cultures around the world love turtles in a not particularly logical way,” Owens said. “I think David is attempting to capture this mystery and intrigue — and at the same time link man’s fate to the fate of turtles, and particularly sea turtles.”

Specifics on the challenges facing sea turtles are deftly woven into the documentary, which PBS has expressed a possible interest in for nationwide screening.

“Obviously, we are always looking for more ways to get the word out about these wonderful creatures and their endangered position,” said Terry Fansler with Seabrook Island Turtle Patrol. “This film will definitely bring excellent attention to them.”

Regionally, “Call of the Ancient Mariner” will be screened on June 28 at the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge in Melbourne Beach, Fla., and in early July at the Georgia Sea Turtle Center in Jekyll Island.

The film has been accepted to the Wildlife Conservation Film Festival in New York City, where it will screen in October.

“Call of the Ancient Mariner” will also have public screenings this year in the Pacific Northwest and in New Mexico, Weintraub said.

For winning the best of the fest award in Charleston, “Call of the Ancient Mariner” will enjoy a week-long run at the Terrace Theater there from May 29 to June 4.

“Since there are so many supporters of the film there, I figured to have two DVD release parties, one there and one here,” Weintraub said.

Weintraub was intrigued by observing that even if people hadn’t ever had physical contact with a sea turtle, there was often still a deeply felt connection.

“Nature, in my mind, is a mirror for us,” Weintraub said. “The attributes of turtles — of nature — teach us a little something about ourselves, what our role in the universe is, who we are and why we’re here.”

Copyright © 2015 BlueRidgeNow.com — All rights reserved. Restricted use only.