

Audiovisual Reviews

THE WONDER OF DOLPHINS

1980. Centron Films, (1621 W. Ninth Street, Box 687, Lawrence, Kansas 66044). 16 mm color-sound film. 11 minutes. Purchase \$235.

According to the "Leader's Guide," this film shows four aspects of the life of dolphins. Supposedly, the introduction treats sound as a means of navigation and communication. The second section treats the association between mother and baby and the attitudes of dolphins toward people. The third segment portrays a group of people who were the first to spend time with wild dolphins. The final portion discusses future associations between dolphins and humans. In fact, the film does none of these things.

In my experience with dolphins I have known them to navigate and locate food by series of clicks and "creaking door" sounds. They also use these "low frequency" sounds to differentiate between objects of a similar size and structure. The echolocation is so accurate that dolphins can differentiate two steel balls with a difference in diameter of only one mm. The high pitched whistles, along with frequencies which the human ear cannot hear, are used for identification and communication. The film mentions the "high pitched creaking door sounds" as a method of communication.

The most glaring error in the film is the identification of a pilot whale or "blackfish" as a 16-foot tropical killer whale. Anyone who knows anything at all about whales would never confuse these two. They are completely different in color, body shape, and temperament.

The attempt to imitate dolphin sounds with an underwater piano is ludicrous, to say the least. Neither the high or low frequency keys were engaged, but several keys in the mid-range were tried in succession. It would have been better not to mention the attempt.

Stories of human interactions with dolphins come to us from as far back as ancient Rome and Greece. Certainly they did not have oceanariums in those days so I must assume that the dolphins were wild. The claim that the people in the film were the first to approach so close to wild dolphins is not believable.

A disconcerting statement in the narration mentions the longevity of dolphins

by stating "when well protected by mother from sharks they will live as long as 30 years." I may be nitpicking, but how long do the mothers live? A rewording of the script is in order here.

There are many more inaccuracies in the script such as size of brain versus intelligence and swimming speed (30 mph). The photography and color in this film are outstanding and do not deserve to be destroyed by such a poor script.

Perhaps an explanation of the poor script quality can be found in the ending credits that state that sequences for this film were taken from a full length feature. They evidently extracted parts of the script from the same feature with little regard to the visual sequence. The film could easily be changed to an outstanding feature with a new script.

As it stands, I cannot recommend this film to anyone, much less biology teachers, because of the inaccuracies and falsehoods it contains.

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THE HOTTEST SHOW ON EARTH

1980. Macmillan Films, Inc., (34 Mac-Questen Parkway So., Mount Vernon, New York 10550). 16 mm color-sound film. 28 minutes. Purchase \$385; rental \$35.

This film presents the problem of energy waste and decreasing supplies of

fossil fuels and proposes conservation as the key to the solution. The major thrust of the film is the use of insulation as one method for conserving energy. Interviews with people on the street show that some still do not believe there is an energy crisis.

The film is made lively and entertaining through the skillful use of animation and music. It will capture and maintain the interest of high school students in any science class. As the publisher states: "(it) uses almost every visual trick in the bag to make a serious point—the importance of home insulation in the light of energy shortages and escalating fuel costs."

Although the film can be used for any group of students and is extremely entertaining, students will be limited to learning one point: insulation is an important method for conserving energy. Because many students live in apartments, the appeal of this approach to understanding conservation methods may decrease the effectiveness of the film. The narrow approach to a complex problem may also seriously limit the usefulness of the film.

Despite these drawbacks, the film can be used in many ways. It may be used to introduce a unit in ecology or as an example of the principles of heat transfer. The interviews with people on the street can motivate discussion of contemporary issues in science, such as new energy technologies and their impact on societal attitudes. In any case, sustained student interest is guaranteed.

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LIFE CYCLE OF A FISH

1980. Macmillan Films, Inc., (34 Mac-Questen Parkway So., Mount Vernon, New York 10550). 16 mm color-sound film. 13 minutes. Purchase \$175; rental \$15.

The life cycle of a killifish is illustrated. The killifish, an international member of the minifish family, is the primary food of many larger fishes as well as an important predator of mosquito larvae. Embry-

Faith Hickman, Audiovisuals Editor, selects materials and coordinates the review process for this feature. Cathrine Monson is her assistant. Their continuing contribution to the journal is deeply appreciated.

Readers interested in becoming audiovisual reviewers are invited to write to Ms. Hickman. General inquiries on this feature should also be addressed directly to her at:

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(Continued on p. 223)