

**Return Flight: Restoring the Bald Eagle to the Channel Islands** (DVD, 2013, 14 and 24 minutes; The Video Project, <http://www.videoproject.com>)

The Channel Islands, an eight-island chain off the coast of Southern California, have served as nesting sites for a variety of birds, including the bald eagle. In the nineteenth century, the ranchers that settled on the islands considered the eagles a threat to their livestock. The ranchers killed off a lot of them. In addition, collectors furthered the eagle's demise by taking eggs as souvenirs. Though these interventions decreased the birds' population, their biggest threat came from the use of DDT in the early to mid-twentieth century. By 1980, no bald eagles remained in Southern California.

In 1962, Rachel Carson published her influential book *Silent Spring*. Carson explained how DDT and other toxins negatively affected ecosystems throughout the United States – particularly harming the reproduction of many bird species. Her book brought about an understanding of the way DDT affected the environment. Public response spawned a movement of environmental awareness that led to a ban on the use of DDT in 1972. At that time, there were just over 400 breeding pairs of bald eagles left in the country.

Wildlife biologist Dave Garcelon and his team devised plans to return the bald eagle to the Channel Islands. After several years of failed attempts, they finally met with success. In 2006, for the first time in more than half a century, a bald eagle chick hatched on Santa Cruz Island without human intervention or assistance. Their numbers continue to steadily increase.

This film offers a feel-good story about how our magnificent national symbol was ripped from the jaws of extinction by a

highly committed team that worked incessantly to save the species. The film includes an eye-opening segment on the use of DDT, which uses vintage footage to show how clouds of the pesticide were sprayed over trees, fields, and lawns; the poison was considered perfectly safe at that time. Also in the video is a complementary story about the rise of golden eagles on Santa Cruz Island after the bald eagles were gone and the corresponding near extinction of the island fox – found only on the Channel Islands.

The DVD includes both a 14- and a 24-minute version of the documentary. The inspiring program is fast-moving and stunningly presented. It would be a wonderful video to use in biology, environmental science, and science-and-society classes at the middle school, high school, or college level. The directors present an outstanding example of how naturalists and scientists worked together over a long time to reverse an environmental catastrophe.

Richard Lord, Jr.  
23 Blake Ave.  
Saco, ME 04072  
[rnlord@aol.com](mailto:rnlord@aol.com)

**The Shape of Life** (DVD and online video series; Sea Studios Foundation, <http://www.theshapeoflife.org>)

Do you want to teach about the water-vascular system found in echinoderms? How about the evolution of jellyfish mobility or the explosion of new lifeforms that occurred during the Cambrian era? If so, then the *Shape of Life* video series is just what you need!

*The Shape of Life* is an excellent collection of short-video segments and lesson plans that survey all the major animal phyla and how each evolved. While the video series

has been around since 2002, the makers now offer it both free and online. The new format divides each episode into short, classroom-friendly segments. Each one can be viewed online or downloaded prior to class.

The video footage and animations in *The Shape of Life* are outstanding. Teachers of biology and marine biology courses can use these segments in any order they want, to enhance their curricula without the hassle of having to rewind a tape or scan through a DVD. Teachers can search through content by the eight major phyla or by the animations, scientist interviews, or other topics of interest. The search box allows anyone to find relevant video segments using keywords. While the content is somewhat elementary in complexity and depth, all the videos in this series are appropriate for learners of various ages.

Even though the content has not been updated since the original 2002 release, it is still very relevant to today's curricula and standards. In fact, the website even advertises alignment with NGSS for grades 5 through 9. To bolster the impact these videos have on classroom practice, the makers include related lesson plans. These can be downloaded as pdf files. *The Shape of Life* also welcomes submissions of teacher-generated lesson plans.

Jeffrey D. Sack  
Science content writer  
Westbrook, CT 06498  
[sack.jeffrey@comcast.net](mailto:sack.jeffrey@comcast.net)

REMY DOU taught high school life science for eight years before becoming an Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellow (2011–2013). Currently he works as a Graduate Assistant at Florida International University where he contributes to STEM education research.