NEWF

FELLOWS SUMMIT AND CONGRESS

WWW.NEWF.CO.ZA

8TH CONGRESS REPORT 2025

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INTRODUCTION

The NEWF Fellows Summit and Congress have become pivotal annual events for the Nature Environment Wildlife Filmmaking (NEWF) community. Rooted in the 2017 inception of the NEWF Congress, our annual gatherings are fuelled by our passion to amplify African voices and address the underrepresentation of Black African filmmakers in the natural history genre.

And how far we have come from that very first N.E.W Pitch.This year, we welcomed, 149 NEWF Fellows, 43 volunteers and 73 Industry speakers from 27 African countries and 23 others to immerse and engage in the 8th edition of the NEWF Fellows Summit and Congress which took place over 5 days; March 30th to April 3rd 2025, at the Southern Sun Maharani hotel in Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Over the years, the event has evolved, expanding to include the pre-Congress NEWF Fellows Summit. This closed-door forum provides a crucial space for NEWF Fellows – individuals who have participated in NEWF's year-round skills development labs – to connect, share insights, and forge collaborative partnerships. These convenings, both the intimate Fellows Summit and the larger Congress, represent the culmination of NEWF's ongoing efforts to democratise access to high-level filmmaking and conservation storytelling skills for African talent.

This year's event continued the tradition of bringing together a diverse group of emerging and experienced filmmakers, storytellers, scientists, conservationists, and media distributors. The focus remained firmly on empowering African visual storytellers, fostering equitable access to opportunities, and strengethening our ties in the global south to expansively refocus the narrative of natural history storytelling from an African and a global perspective.

We invite you to be enlightened, to be inspired and to garner new and continued support for this growing movement of change throughout Africa and beyond. These pages can't hold the experience entirely, but we hope it will sow a small seed for collective growth long into the future.

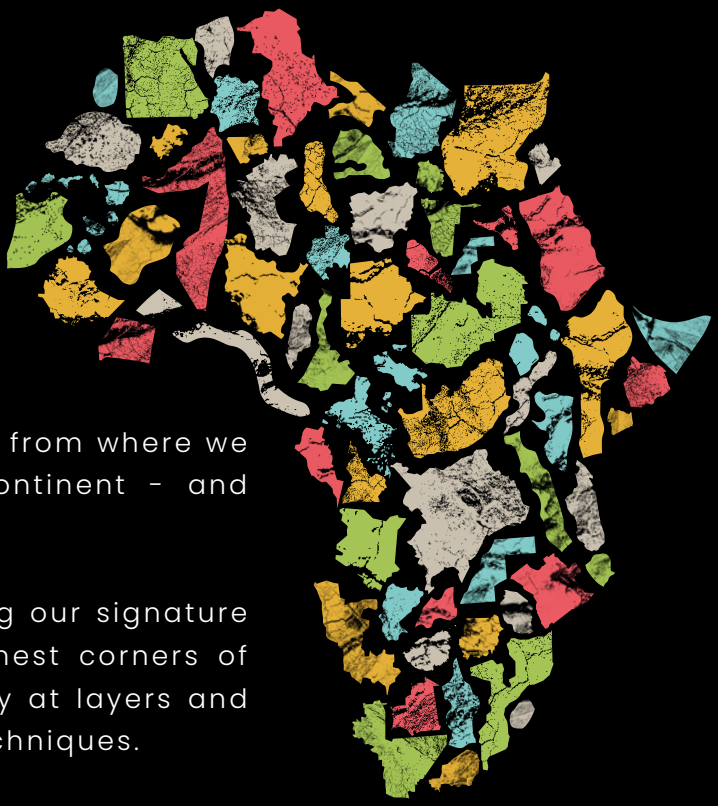
WATCH

This is the Africa we have dreamt of, we invite you to dream and do more with us.

-Noel AND Pragna



OUR DESIGN STORY



Across our continent, and to the world!

Over time, our designs have travelled from where we meet, to the rest of the African continent - and around the world!

To break the echo chamber and bring our signature kaleidoscope of colour into the furthest corners of the industry, we started peeling away at layers and layers of research, references and techniques.

Geography, space and place matter in how we experience the world around us and the depth of stories it holds. This design denotes a belief that borders only serve as geographic touch points where our cultures meld together in fascinating ways that are seldom known - among us and more so the world.

If we had new neighbours, how would we represent our African identities?
How would our advocacy, documentaries and visual stories diversify to connect with Africa and the world?
How much more robust would our momentum, resources, scientific methodologies and cultural preservation be?

This brand story and pattern represents an Africa inspired and reimagined by the NEWF community. The featured pattern was designed by NEWF's in-house graphic designer Cimera Naidoo.

NEWF STORY ARC

LINKEDIN STORY ARC

KWALLIYA BY HALIMA ABUBAKAR

Anyone who has been to Summit and Congress knows that we are intentional about sourcing merchandise that boldly and stylishly represent our community. Often what makes it particularly special is intentionally curated creative elements that speak to the collective growth, exploration of culture and exchange in our community. This year, our tote broke away from #NEWF2025's thematic branding to reimagine and showcase NEWF Fellow Halima Abubakar's exhibition, 'Kwalliya'.

About KWALLIYA by Halima Abubakar

'Kwalliya' is a project dedicated to documenting and honouring the traditional tattooing practices of Northern Nigeria, an art form that is quickly fading away due to shifts in religious beliefs and modern medical practices.

Rooted in the intricate facial and body markings worn by my grandmother, this project explores these tattoos as powerful symbols of identity, beautification, personal stories, and ancestral connections. 'Kwalliya' goes beyond mere documentation; it seeks to spark a conversation about cultural preservation and the stories we inherit.



"My work captures the heart of traditional African cultural tattoos, stories and practices that are deeply woven into nature. These ancient traditions reveal a unique bond with the environment, reflecting a wisdom that shows how communities have long lived in harmony."

LEARN MORE

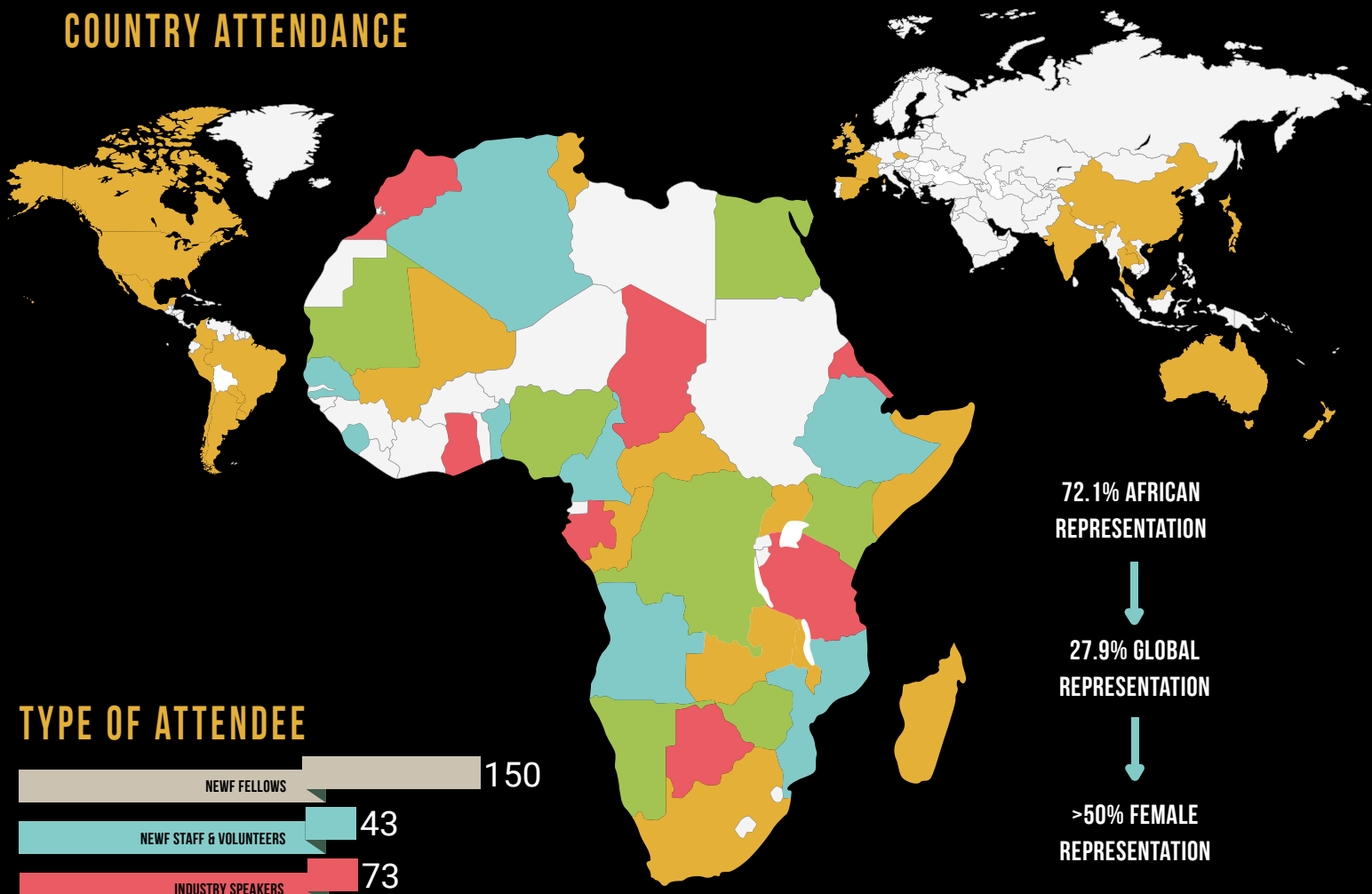
FELLOWS SUMMIT AND CONGRESS REPORT #2025

STATISTICS

FELLOWS SUMMIT **2** DAYS

CONGRESS **3** DAYS

COUNTRY ATTENDANCE



72.1% AFRICAN REPRESENTATION

27.9% GLOBAL REPRESENTATION

>50% FEMALE REPRESENTATION

TYPE OF ATTENDEE

CAREERS BY #'S

107 PRODUCER	13 IMPACT
62 SCIENTIST	8 FUNDER
61 CONSERVATIONIST	5 BROADCASTER
55 CINEMATOGRAPHER	3 ECO-TOURISM
52 PHOTOGRAPHER	2 FESTIVALS
50 DIRECTOR	2 COMPOSER
34 WRITER	2 MUSIC
31 CONTENT CREATOR	2 GUIDE
30 SELF-CONTAINED PRODUCER	2 COACH
27 EDITOR	2 RESEARCHER
23 JOURNALIST	

SESSIONS

- 3 CONVERSATIONS
- 12 LIVE PITCH
- 15 PANELS
- 4 PRESENTATIONS
- 6 FILM SCREENINGS
- 3 FILM TEASERS
- 1 TECH SHOWCASE
- 5 SPECIAL PLENARIES
- 5+ WELLNESS SESSIONS
- 19 WELLNESS SESSIONS

LIVE STREAM

1158 VIEWS

22 HOURS 25MIN

NETWORKING

1694 TOTAL CONTACTS MADE

516 TOTAL DISCUSSIONS CREATED

1547 TOTAL MESSAGES EXCHANGED

#NEWF2025 IMPACT

RESPONDEE IMPACT STATS

70.27% SKILLS GAINED → 90.99% KNOWLEDGE GAINED → 87.39% NETWORK GROWTH

*Impact value statistics are based on a subset of 111 attendees who submitted feedback in time for this report.



78.38%

RESPONDEES HOPE TO ATTEND THE NEWF SUMMIT AND CONGRESS IN FUTURE



99.1%

RESPONDEES WOULD RECOMMEND ATTENDANCE TO OTHERS



98.2%

OF RESPONDEES FELT #NEWF2025 PROVIDED VALUABLE INSIGHTS AND/OR SKILLS RELATED TO THEIR CAREERS.

I got back home with a renewed sense of purpose and a lot of inspiration! It was so refreshing to spend a week surrounded by such an incredible community full of many talents, hope, love, humility and brilliant ideas for the betterment of our beautiful continent and the world.

- ***Elise Nghalipho***

I love how inclusive and conducive this community is for all demographics. Besides the professional environment, I enjoyed seeing all the children at Summit and Congress and most importantly seeing the fathers who were taking care of their kids in the presence of everyone else. That warmed my heart and made me see a future where I don't have to leave my people at home when attending future events because I know the space is conducive and welcoming for them.

- ***Peter Ndung'u Kamau***

The conference itself was powerful: the conversations and the community you've built are nothing short of extraordinary. I walked away feeling not only inspired, but deeply moved by the passion, purpose, and creativity that you and your fellows embody and live.

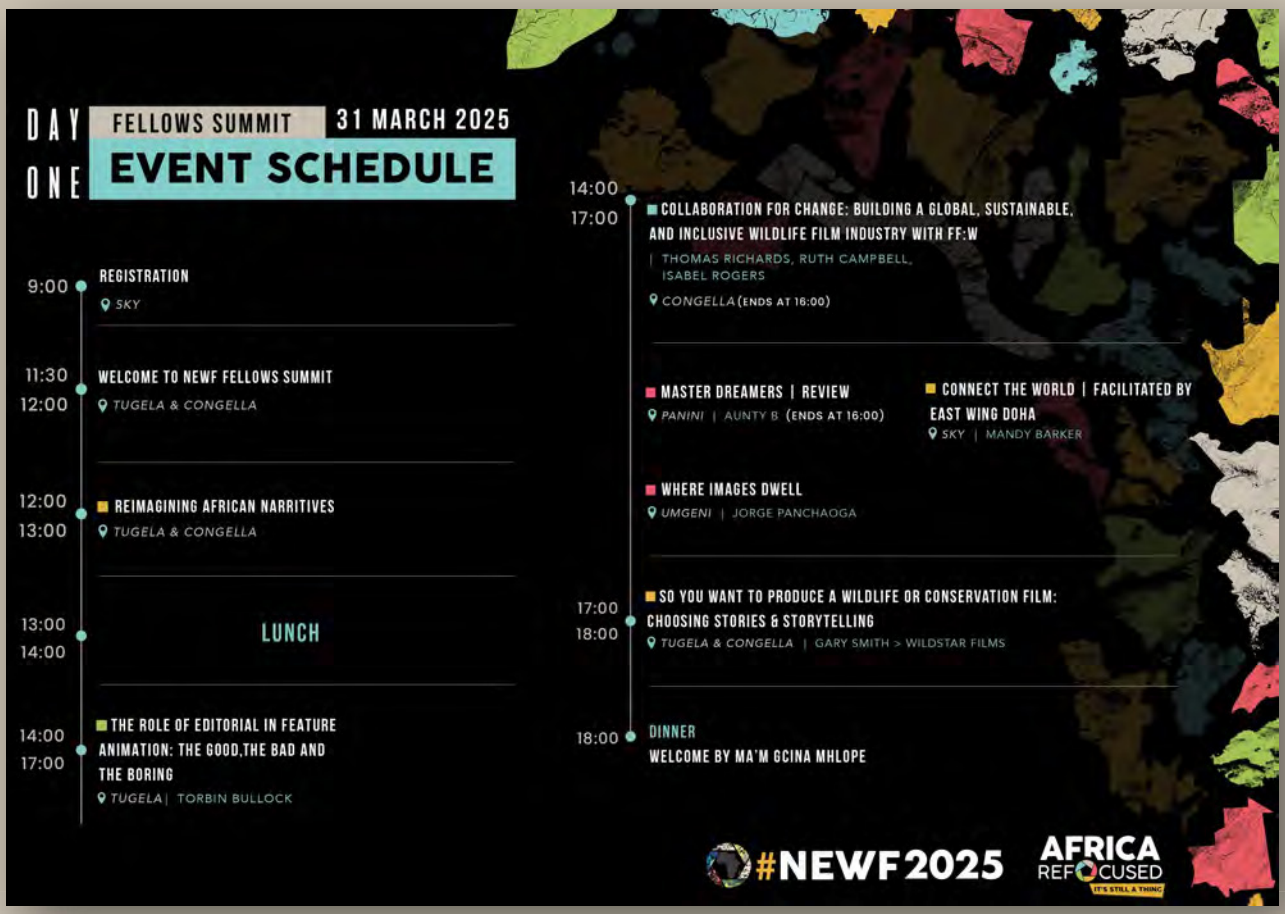
- ***Anne Olzmann***

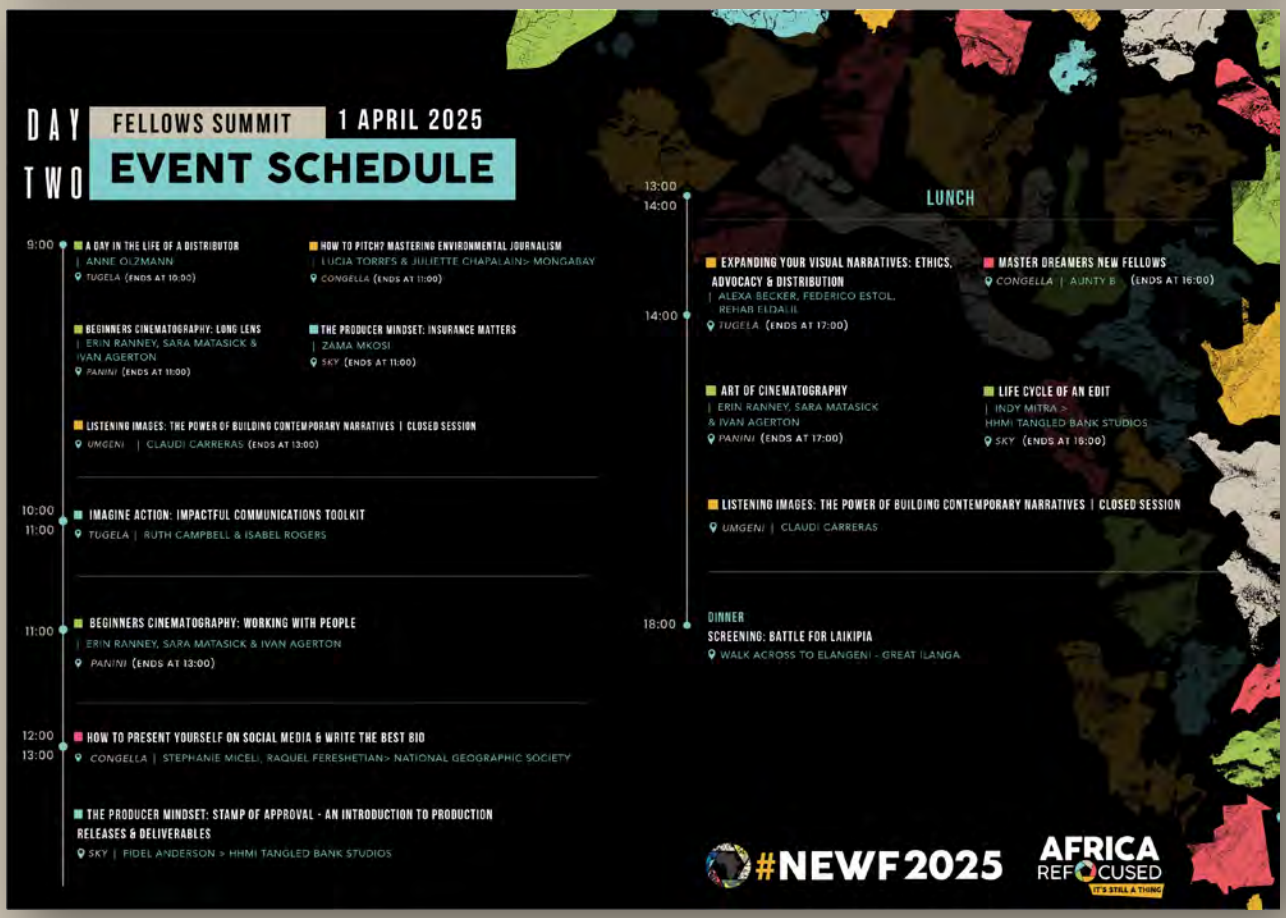
"I have attended many film festivals over the years, and enjoyed them all, but never have I been to one where every session gave me a fresh perspective on our industry, made me think differently, made me laugh so much, or taught me new things. I felt genuine hope, passion, friendship and purpose at every turn. I also greatly enjoyed my conversations with the other delegates and fellows, and I have no doubt new collaborations will arise from this"

- ***Patrick Morris***



EVENT SCHEDULE





EVENT SCHEDULE

DAY ONE — CONGRESS — 2 APRIL 2025 EVENT SCHEDULE

8:45 **WELCOME TO NEWF CONGRESS**
TUGELA & CONGELLA (ENDS AT 9:00)

9:30–10:30 **STATE OF THE CONTINET ADDRESS**
TUGELA & CONGELLA | BARBARA LAWRENCE-STRYDOM (AUNTY B)

10:30–11:30 **AFRICAMERICANOS**
TUGELA & CONGELLA | CLAUDI CARRERAS

11:30 **NEW HEIGHTS: A DRONE APPROACH**
| JACK JOHNSTON, ANTHONY NJUGUNA, JOB GITHAKA, NATHAN RICE
PANINI (ENDS AT 12:30)

11:30 **A MATCH MADE IN SCIENCE**
| AMY CHEN, MATTHEW GERMISHUIZEN, ESTHER MATHEW, SALMAH JOMBELA, ENELE TWALA
SKY (ENDS AT 12:30)

13:00–14:00 **LUNCH**

14:00 **NEXT CHAPTER PITCH**
SKY (ENDS AT 15:00)

15:00–16:00 **SO I HAVE AN IDEA NOW WHAT**
TUGELA & CONGELLA | TINY MUNGWE, WAGECI MURAGE, HICHAM FALAH

16:00–17:00 **BATTLE FOR LAIKIPIA: THE APPROACH & PROCESS**
TUGELA & CONGELLA | TONI KAMAU & SIFISO KHANYILE

17:00 *** SHUTTLES TO BANYARD THEATRE* (17:05 - 17:25)
DINNER
WELCOME BY MA'M GCINA MHLOPE
PRIVATE PREMIERE SCREENING: WILD HOPE - RHINO OPS + FILMMAKERS Q&A

#NEWF2025 AFRICA REFOCUSED

DAY TWO — CONGRESS — 3 APRIL 2025 EVENT SCHEDULE

9:00–10:00 **IN CONVERSATION WITH PATRICK MORRIS**
TUGELA & CONGELLA

10:00–11:30 **FIELD TO FRAME: MENTORSHIP & THE FUTURE OF FILMMAKING**
| *MUNMUN DHALARIA, SAMUEL DIAZ FERNANDEZ, CHRISTINE LIN, RACHAEL STRECHER, KAREN GREENFIELD > NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY + NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CONTENT*
TUGELA & CONGELLA

11:30 **DON'T CHOOSE THE SAME MESSAGE FOR ALL AUDIENCES: HOW TO STRATEGIZE FOR IMPACT**
| *REYHANEH MAKTOUFI, NICOLA DAVIES-LAUBSCHER, VERONIQUE COUTTEE-JENKINS*
CONGELLA

12:00–13:00 **SHAPING YOUR DOCUMENTARY FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT**
| *TINY MUNGWE, WAGECI MURAGE, SAMIRA VERA-CRUZ*
PANINI

STORIES FROM THE FIELD
| *ERIN RANNEY, SARA MATASICK, GUNJAN MENON, PETER NDUNG'U, SHAMIER MAGMOET, LABDI OMMES*
SKY

13:00–14:00 **LUNCH**

14:00 **NEXT CHAPTER PITCH**
SKY (ENDS AT 15:00)

15:00–16:00 **BIRDS OF A FEATHER**
| *CHRISTIAN COOPER, SEWELA MUTILENI, DR SAMUEL IVANDE, CHRISTINE LIN, NOMSA NKOMO*
TUGELA

THE GULO FILM PHILOSOPHY: HOW TO MAKE BLUE-CHIP IF YOU'RE NOT THE BIG CHIPS
| *OLIVER GOETZL*
SKY

16:00–17:00 **FOLLOW THE WATER**
| *DAVID LOUGHRAN, SAMANTHA ZARANDIN, MANDY BARKER, SHIN ARUNRUGSTICHAI, MALIN FEZEHAI, HUIYING ORE & PABLO ALBARENGA*
TUGELA & CONGELLA

18:00 **DINNER**
SCREENING: THE LAST RANGER
FILMMAKERS Q&A

#NEWF2025 AFRICA REFOCUSED

EVENT SCHEDULE

DAY THREE — CONGRESS — 4 APRIL 2025

EVENT SCHEDULE

9:00 — IN CONVERSATION WITH TORBIN BULLOCK
| MANU AKATSA & TORBIN BULLOCK
TUGELA

10:00 – 11:00
ELEVATING A SENSE OF PLACE IN STORYTELLING
| ADAM JENKINS & VERONIQUE COUTTEE JENKINS, MUHA GOMATE
CONGELLA

SHAPING YOUR DOCUMENTARY FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT
| TINY MUNGWE, WAGECI MURAGE, SAMIRA VERA-CRUZ
PANINI

CHARACTER & SEQUENCE BUILDING IN NATURAL HISTORY
| GARY SMITH > WILDSTAR FILMS
SKY

11:20 – 12:15 — THE EUROPEAN ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: INDUSTRY UPDATE
| ANNE OLZMANN, CHRISTIAN COOLS, JACKIE SAVERY, NICOLAS ZUNINO
TUGELA & CONGELLA

12:20 – 13:15 — DIVING WITH A PURPOSE: IN CONVERSATION WITH KAMAU SADIKI
| STEFANIE TITUS & KAMAU SADIKI
TUGELA & CONGELLA

13:15 – 14:00 — LUNCH

14:00 — NEXT CHAPTER PITCH
TUGELA (ENDS AT 15:00)

15:00 – 16:00 — THE DIGITAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE
| INDY MITRA, GEOFF LUCK, MANU AKATSA, LUCIA TORRES, REYHANEH MAKTOUFI
TUGELA & CONGELLA

16:00 – 17:00 — GLOBAL SOUTH: OPPORTUNITIES, EXPLORATION & EXPRESSION
| MARTIN DEL RIO & SHAHIDUL ALAM
TUGELA & CONGELLA

19:00 — DINNER
SCREENING: SOUTH X SOUTH LAB FILM SHOWCASE
CLOSING CELEBRATION

#NEW



SUMMIT AT A GLANCE







Fellows Summit

#NEWF2025

31 MARCH - 1 APRIL

The NEWF Fellows Summit delivered a rich and immersive program meticulously designed to empower fellows with essential insights and practical skills vital for navigating and excelling in the dynamic world of wildlife filmmaking and storytelling. Recognising the industry's multifaceted nature, the Summit showcased a diverse range of sessions led by seasoned professionals.

Anne Olzmann's session, 'A Day in the Life of a Distributor,' offered invaluable clarity on the often intricate world of documentary distribution. She explored acquisition strategies, negotiation tactics with broadcasters and streamers, and the art of crafting impactful marketing campaigns to resonate with global audiences.

The 'Collaboration for Change' workshop, led by Filmmakers for Future Wildlife, fostered crucial dialogue on fostering a more sustainable and equitable industry. Fellows were encouraged to address the environmental impact of their productions and advocate for fairer collaborations.

SUMMIT AT A GLANCE

Moreover, the Summit focused on enhancing crucial professional development skills. Ruth Campbell and Isabel Rogers' 'Imagine Action: Impactful Communications Toolkit' equipped fellows with practical tools to maximize the societal impact of their content. Fidel Anderson's 'Stamp of Approval: An Introduction to Production Releases & Deliverables' provided foundational knowledge on the essential legal aspects of filmmaking, ensuring fellows understand the significance of clearances for distribution.

The popular 'Stories from the Field' session nurtured community and peer learning, allowing fellows to share real-world experiences and glean valuable insights from one another. Cinematography sessions, guided by industry veterans, offered both introductory ('Beginners Cinematography: Long Lens' and 'Beginners Cinematography: Working with People') and advanced perspectives ('Art of Cinematography').Additionally, the Summit featured vital sessions on pitching techniques, ethical storytelling considerations, building a professional social media presence, and cultivating a 'Producer Mindset,' ensuring fellows departed with a comprehensive toolkit for success in their careers.



FELLOWS SUMMIT
DAY ONE | 31 MARCH

THE ROLE OF EDITORIAL IN FEATURE ANIMATIONS: THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE BORING

TORBIN BULLOCK | MOTION PICTURE EDITOR



Building on last year's curated exploration of animation through the lens of Uli and Tata's African Nursery Rhymes, Manu Akatsa (Kenya) returned to stoke fascinating conversation and light-hearted banter in conversation with industry trailblazer, Torbin Bullock (Skydance Animation Studio, US) who spent the formative decades of his career at Pixar Animation Studios, where his career took a new leap with the box-office hit Toy Story.

COLLABORATION FOR CHANGE: BUILDING A GLOBAL, SUSTAINABLE, AND INCLUSIVE WILDLIFE FILM INDUSTRY WITH FF:W



THOMAS RICHARDS
PRODUCER & CO-ORGANISER



RUTH CAMPBELL
SELF CONTAINED PRODUCER OR CONTENT CREATOR



ISABEL ROGERS
SHOOTING DIRECTOR AND CO-ORGANISER

This workshop was hosted by co-organisers of 'Filmmakers for Future Wildlife'. Fellows who participated connected, shared experiences, and explored practical solutions for a more sustainable and equitable wildlife filmmaking industry. Together, we discussed the climate footprint of production, content that drove real impact, and tackled extractive practices to secure fairer collaborations. Through interactive discussions and hands-on learning, Fellows gained new insights and had a chance to brainstorm creative solutions and holistic practices. Participants experienced a dynamic, collaborative session where their voices, ideas, and experiences contributed to building a more inclusive, impactful, and ethical industry.

MASTER DREAMERS | REVIEW

AUNTY B | CEO AFRICA STRATEGIST AND MENTOR



Summit is a springboard for inspiration and change. One of our favourite sessions, now a program tradition of sorts, is Master Dreamer Vision Boarding with Barbara Lawrence Strydom (Aunty B) who takes us on an intuitive journey of visualising the life and impact we want to make. Aunty B, will be running a specific 2 hour workshop for fellows who have already participated in a Master Dreamer session either at Summit, Congress or a Lab.

FELLOWS SUMMIT

DAY ONE | 31 MARCH

WHERE IMAGES DWELL

JORGE PANCHAOGA | CONTENT DIRECTOR



This workshop invites participants to immerse themselves in the collection of personal and collective images they have created over their lifetime. Through sensory evocation exercises, oral storytelling, and image production, the goal is to activate imagination and strengthen the connection with the stories that surround us. Participants will work with sounds, smells, and drawings to reconstruct memories, creating a bridge between memory and image. Later, they will translate these narratives into a production planning process using storyboarding and scripting, making them useful for their personal or professional workflow.

SO YOU WANT TO PRODUCE A WILDLIFE OR CONSERVATION FILM: CHOOSING STORIES AND STORYTELLING

GARY SMITH | PRODUCER/DIRECTOR



Join Gary Smith for the Award-Winning Wildstar Films as he breaks it down - exploring the the structure of the story and main character – and why it's done in a certain way.

CONNECT THE WORLD | FACILITATED BY EAST WING DOHA

MANDY BARKER | PHOTOGRAPHER





Join photographic artist Mandy Barker on a journey of her work and learn about her collaborations with scientists, educators, explorers, and communities — partnerships that have taken her to some of the world's most remote locations, where plastic pollution lies alongside endemic species. Through these experiences, she has become one of the most acknowledged photographic artists raising global awareness of this urgent environmental issue of today.

FELLOWS SUMMIT
DAY TWO | 1 APRIL

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A DISTRIBUTOR

ANNE OLZMANN | MANAGING DIRECTOR & DISTRIBUTOR



Discover the fast-paced world of documentary distribution—where storytelling meets strategy. In this session, you'll gain insight into how distributors acquire films, negotiate sales with broadcasters and streamers, and craft marketing campaigns to bring documentaries to global audiences. We'll explore different distribution approaches and what drives success in today's market, uncovering the behind-the-scenes efforts that ensure powerful stories reach the right platforms. Whether you're a filmmaker or industry professional, this discussion offers an in-depth look at the deals, deadlines, and decisions shaping the documentary landscape.

HOW TO PITCH? MASTERING ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM



LUCIA TORRES
VIDEO MANAGING DIRECTOR



JULIETTE CHAPALAIN
MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

Environmental journalism goes beyond wildlife and climate disasters—it's about people, solutions, and untold stories. In this workshop, we explored how to craft compelling, well-researched pitches that stand out to editors. Participants learned how to generate original story ideas, define strong angles, and ensure accuracy while debunking misinformation, and concluded with a hands-on exercise to gain practical skills to refine their own proposals.

BEGINNERS CINEMATOGRAPHY: LONG LENS



ERIN RANNEY
PHOTOGRAPHY/
CINEMATOGRAPHER



SARA MATASICK
CINEMATOGRAPHER



IVAN AGERTON
CINEMATOGRAPHER

This hands-on workshop introduced participants to useful camera set-ups for filming people, combining the visual and audio aspects. Using mixed camera systems (RED, Sony, Canon), they learned how these different systems can work together during a shoot and in edit.

FELLOWS SUMMIT
DAY TWO | 1 APRIL

THE PRODUCER MINDSET

ZAMA MKOSI | CEO AND FOUNDER, FILM PROTECTION UNIT INSURANCE ADVISORY



A session focused on empowering filmmakers and other industry professionals with tools on how to manage legal and insurance risks associated with film production.The Session will delve into unpacking and highlighting often missed film production legal and insurance risks.

IMAGINE ACTION: IMPACTFUL COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT



RUTH CAMPBELL
SELF CONTAINED PRODUCER
OR CONTENT CREATOR



ISABEL ROGERS
SHOOTING DIRECTOR
AND CO-ORGANISER DIRECTOR

This 1-hour session introduced participants to the Imagine Action toolkit. This toolkit was created by some of the leading thinkers and researchers in communications for social change and was designed to equip communicators with ten simple ways of maximising the impact of their content.

LISTENING IMAGES: THE POWER OF BUILDING CONTEMPORARY NARRATIVES

CLAUDI CARRERAS | CURATOR AND CULTURAL PRODUCER





An independent curator, editor, cultural producer and photography researcher, Claudi Carerras brought his wealth of knowledge to the community and presented a masterclass Listening Images: The Power of Building Contemporary Narratives. The full day session blinked the classroom of thirteen creatives through his research and field work that provided cultural and ethical context for Africamericanos as a case study of an expansive, community-inclusive and impact-driven work. Each artist took a turn to creatively interrogate and sequence the images of a different artist with no context or research provided to challenge the beginning, middle and end of stories - and the endless ways images connect to tell different stories using the same body of work.

FELLOWS SUMMIT
DAY TWO | 1 APRIL

BEGINNERS CINEMATOGRAPHY: WORKING WITH PEOPLE



ERIN RANNEY
PHOTOGRAPHY/ CINEMATOGRAPHER



SARA MATASICK
CINEMATOGRAPHER



IVAN AGERTON
CINEMATOGRAPHER

This workshop was a hands-on introduction to useful camera set-ups for filming people, combining the visual and audio aspects. Participants practised handheld operation filming techniques, and learned tips for working with talent. Using mixed camera systems (RED, Sony, Canon), they learned how these different systems can work together during a shoot and in post-production.

HOW TO PRESENT YOURSELF ON SOCIAL MEDIA & WRITE THE BEST BIO



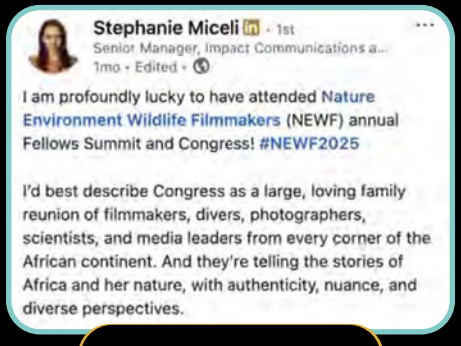
STEPHANIE MICELI
SENIOR MANAGER, IMPACT COMMUNICATIONS/ PUBLIC RELATIONS



RAQUEL FERESHETIAN
SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER, CONTENT & EDITORIAL PRODUCER

Whether it's polishing your LinkedIn Bio and headline, sharing a story about your work or engaging on social media - this session with the National Geographic Society Impact Communication team offered participants tips on how to best portray themselves and their work in the public realm.





VIEW LIVE POST

REIMAGINING AFRICAN NARRATIVES

AFRICA REFOCUSED

EAST WING

For an artist to reach the heart of a story, they must embrace time, listen deeply, and approach their process with endless patience. It requires respect and sensitivity toward the collaborator's lived experiences, translating what they witness into visual language.

The Reimagining African Narratives Lab at Bayala Private Safari Camp was a transformative experience for everyone involved. Sharing space with the fellows as they immersed themselves, trusting their instincts and uncovering the deeper reasons behind their projects was profoundly moving. The mentors also learned from one another through their varied teaching approaches, and together, our diverse cultures wove a dynamic and collaborative learning environment, one that continues to evolve as their stories unfold.

Following the lab, the fellows were asked to present their projects to the NEWF community in attendance at the #NEWF2025 Summit. Initially surprised, they drew from the energy of our exchange in Bayala, sharing their experiences of the ongoing evolution of their projects since the beginning of our collaboration, holding the attention of the entire room. Their powerful presentations were a reminder that the process of art-making should not be viewed as something rarefied. At the heart of it, we are all storytellers. The essence of a story lies in who tells it and how they approach it - the ethics behind it, the language we use to describe it, and the vision we bring to sharing it. This is where the voice of the artist emerges.

Reflection on the pre-Congress lab and #NEWF2025 experience contributed by Peggy Sue Amison, the Lead Facilitator and Co-Creator of the Reimagining African Narratives Photography Fellowship, and Artistic Director of the East Wing Doha whose support we are immensely grateful for.



FELLOWS SUMMIT DAY 2
KENYA NIGHT | FILM SCREENING



THE BATTLE FOR LAIKIPIA

The second night of Summit invited fellows to dress in Kenyan and Kenyan-inspired style as a nod to the country and their peers who know the region and have an intimate connection to The Battle for Laikipia. Climate change and unresolved historical injustices raise the stakes in a generations old conflict between Indigenous pastoralists and white landowners in a wildlife conservation haven. The audience were left reeling; grappling with questions of indigenous dignity, the audacity they still confront, the concepts of ownership versus custodianship and the importance of how we craft films.

ABOUT THE BATTLE FOR LAIKIPIA

For centuries, Kenya's Laikipia region has been a grazing route for indigenous pastoralist communities. It is also home to white ranchers and conservationists who settled there during the British colonial era and stayed after Kenya's independence in 1963. Since 2017, we have intimately filmed our characters as they confront a rapidly changing world. Laikipia has been feeling the ravaging effects of climate change for decades; the pastoralists, the ranchers and conservancies rely on Laikipia's grasslands to sustain their cattle and the wildlife. When drought and elections collide, conflict erupts. Our story goes beyond the headline grabbing conflict. Exploring identity, the complicated legacy of British colonialism, and the intersection with climate change, all while happening during the most fragile moment of our planet.



CONGRESS AT A GLANCE



Congress

#NEWF2025 2 APRIL - 4 APRIL

The NEWF Congress offered a dynamic and diverse program, encompassing a wide range of topics crucial for African wildlife and environmental storytellers. The sessions aimed to inspire, educate, and foster collaboration within the industry.

A highlight was "A Match Made in Science," a unique game show-style panel where researchers creatively presented their work, demonstrating the inherent storytelling potential within scientific discovery. The practical realities of filmmaking were explored in the "Battle of Laikipia" case study, offering insights into the challenges and experiences of producing impactful narratives in complex environments.

Whilst “Follow The Water" presented a unique perspective on ecological storytelling from Global Majority storytellers, focusing on water-related issues.

Finally, "Stories from the Field" provided an interactive space for participants to share their personal experiences and learning moments from on-location work. The inclusion of "The European Elephant in the Room: Industry Update" and "The Digital Media Landscape" ensured attendees were also informed about broader industry trends and opportunities.

CONGRESS AT A GLANCE

The Congress also featured in-depth conversations with accomplished individuals. "In Conversation with Patrick Morris" delved into the evolution of natural history filmmaking, while "Diving With a Purpose: In Conversation with Kamau Sidiki" highlighted the powerful intersection of underwater archaeology, history, and storytelling, particularly concerning the Transatlantic Era of African Enslavement. Another "In Conversation" session featured Torbin Bullock, offering insights into the crucial role of editorial in feature animation.Practical filmmaking skills were addressed in sessions like "New Heights: A Drone Approach," exploring innovative drone techniques, and "Field to Frame: Mentorship & the Future of Filmmaking," emphasising the importance of guidance and network building. "Character & Sequence Building in Natural History" dug deeper into the art of crafting compelling narratives within the genre.

Understanding audience engagement and impact was a key theme, explored in sessions such as "Don't Choose the Same Message for All Audiences: How to Strategise for Impact" and "Shaping Your Documentary for Maximum Impact," which offered practical guidance on tailoring messages and formats for different viewers.



STATE OF THE CONTINENT ADDRESS

Barbara Lawrence-Strydom, widely and affectionately known as Aunty B - is a visionary strategist, explorer, indigenous and heritage storyteller, diversity practitioner, and transformation translator with over 18 years of experience in the financial industry. She is dedicated to shaping the narrative of the African story and passionate about igniting dreams through her MasterDreamer Vision Sessions. A published author of the trilogy: 'Seed is Life', 'Waste Knot', and 'The Power of Hemp', Aunty B is committed to promoting self-reliance, abundance, and succession through responsible stewardship, sustainable environmental practices, and equity.

A longtime supporter of NEWF, she continued to inspire as an environmental storyteller, in true Aunty B style: confident, fully present and barefoot! Fuelled by an abundance of passionate wisdom and ancestral support, we explored the current landscape of African and Indigenous environmental storytelling and envisioned new pathways forward.

Igniting the power and vision within us all to dream, to be, and to take action in her unapologetic, State of the Continent Address, she spoke to being where our feet are and rooting deeply into our collective and ancestral identities.



CONGRESS

DAY ONE | 2 APRIL

NEW HEIGHTS: A DRONE APPROACH



JACK JOHNSTON
DOCUMENTARY EDITOR
& AERIAL CINEMATOGRAPHER



ANTHONY NJUGUNA
CREATIVE DIRECTOR,
CINEMATOGRAPHER
& AERIAL CINEMATOGRAPHER



JOB GITHAKA
DIRECTOR & CINEMATOGRAPHER



NATHAN RICE
DIRECTOR

We take a look at the latest trends in Drone technology and how natural history aerial cinematography has evolved over the years add to how stories can be told in a more dynamic way.

AFRICAMERICANOS

CLAUDI CARRERAS | CURATOR AND CULTURAL PRODUCER



Africamericanos is a multiplatform research, dissemination, exhibition, and participative production project that seeks to exhibit, reflect on, and influence the construction of imaginaries of Afro-descendant communities in Latin America and the Caribbean. It demonstrates how the pulse of this cultural tradition can be felt all across the western hemisphere, from North to South. The processes of the invisibilization, whitening, concealment, and deconstruction of the images of Afro-descendants were evident in this expansive, long term projects successful and passionate attempt to reveal and reconstruct visually the map of the African diaspora from a range of disciplines and perspectives.



AFRICAMERICANOS

CONGRESS

DAY ONE | 2 APRIL

SO I HAVE AN IDEA NOW WHAT



TINY MUNGWE
PRODUCER



WANGECI MURAGE
CEO, MEDIA PROS AFRICA



HICHAM FALAH
FESTIVAL AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES DIRECTOR

If our films are like our children, gaining a life of their own once they are made, how can we ensure they have the best possible future? From concept to writing, production, and distribution, this panel explored where impact documentaries fit within the industry and how filmmakers can navigate different formats and platforms to maximize their reach.

A MATCH MADE IN SCIENCE



AMY CHEN
SCIENTIST / CONSERVATIONIST



MATTHEW GERMISHUIZEN
SCIENTIST / CONSERVATIONIST



ESTHER MATHEW
SENIOR SPECIALIST CONSERVATION OFFICER



ENELE TWALA
SCIENTIST / CONSERVATIONIST

What happens when scientists step onto the stage? In this game show-style panel, four researchers went head-to-head to prove that their science is the most fascinating, surprising, and story-worthy. Intrigue, unexpected twists, and the thrilling exploration of conservation science met a diverse audience of scientists and storytellers. In the end, the audience choice went to Enele Twala whose story they felt was the most unforgettable!

CONGRESS

DAY ONE | 2 APRIL

BATTLE FOR LAIKIPIA: APPROACH & PROCESS



TONI KAMAU
PRODUCER



SIFISO KHANYILE
DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, WRITER

This panel with the film's producer, Toni Kamau, and Archive Producer, Sifiso Khanyile explored the creative direction, archive features and the high level of access to bring the project to life.

POST BY : PRECIOUS ASHUNGANYA (@PRECIOUS.ASH.7731)

"I will never forget how watching [The Battle for Laikipia] made me feel. Because it reinforced in my heart why such stories need to be told. Because ahead of every major change are the stories untold, rising, echoing and paving the way for an era of change.

So this quote, which I deeply connect with from the movie, 'This time I am just looking,' is a beautiful way to say our story isn't over yet."



VIEW LIVE POST



CONGRESS DAY 1: ZULULAND NIGHT | FILM SCREENING



WILD HOPE RHINO OPS

"The premiere of Rhino Ops marks a profound moment for Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. This is not just a film — it is a powerful narrative that brings to light the extraordinary work carried out by our Game Capture Unit, under the capable leadership of Mr Dumisani Zwane. Often operating behind the scenes, these dedicated professionals put their lives on the line to protect one of South Africa's most iconic species — the rhinoceros. Their courage, technical skill, and unwavering commitment to conservation are now captured on screen for the world to see, and, yes, their story deserves not only to be told but also to be seen, honoured and remembered. " Sihle Mkhize - CEO of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

"The screening of Rhino Ops reminded me that what I do is not just about protecting wildlife — it's about honouring the people of this country as well as those who visit our country to appreciate our wildlife. I hope that this screening inspires a deeper public appreciation and support for the work of my organisation, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. The audience's electrifying reaction during the screening has deeply ignited my sense of purpose and strengthened my determination to go further in ensuring that the organisation succeed in safeguarding this precious species." Hlengiwe Nzuza



CONGRESS

DAY TWO | 3 APRIL

IN CONVERSATION WITH PATRICK MORRIS

PATRICK MORRIS | EXECUTIVE PRODUCER



In Conversation with Patrick Morris' provided NEWF Fellows with a rich exploration of the natural history filmmaking genre's evolution. Drawing from his extensive thirty-year career, beginning with early experiences on 'Islands in the African Sky' that highlighted the challenges of filming with limited technology like film rolls, Morris illuminated the transformative impact of advancements such as Cineflex helicopters and drones.

FIELD TO FRAME: MENTORSHIP & THE FUTURE OF FILMMAKING



MUNMUN DHALARIA
DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, CINEMATOGRAPHER



SAMUEL FERNANDEZ
FOUNDER, FILMMAKER, DIRECTOR



CHRISTINE LIN
DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER, PRODUCER



RACHAEL STRECHER
VP, STORYTELLING



KAREN GREENFIELD
SVP, INCLUSIVE CONTENT & ENGAGEMENT BROADCASTER

National Geographic Content Partners and National Geographic Society have been committed to supporting early career filmmakers with opportunities that will help them advance in their careers. These programs include the opportunity to get real world experience by being attached to premium productions commissioned by National Geographic Content. This panel conversation between Field Ready Alumni, discussed the significance of mentorship, skills and business training, and growing a strong network to a community of peer filmmakers and storytellers. National Geographic Society leadership also spoke about their own careers and the important role mentorship played in their success.



CONGRESS

DAY TWO | 3 APRIL

DON'T CHOOSE THE SAME MESSAGE FOR ALL AUDIENCES: HOW TO STRATEGIZE FOR IMPACT



REYHANEH MAKTOUFI
SCIENCE COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST & RESEARCHER



NICOLA LAUBSCHER
POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW



VERONIQUE JENKINS
FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR, GEOSPATIAL EQUITY TECH

This interactive workshop explored how participants can approach strategising for their science communication, stories, and public engagement projects to increase in impact. Together they identified a target audience, set goals (behavior change) and objectives (feelings and belief change). They also discussed the role of evaluation and involving audiences and communities in developing an effective and ethical strategic plan.

SHAPING YOUR DOCUMENTARY FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT



TINY MUNGWE
PRODUCER



WANGECI MURAGE
CEO, MEDIA PROS AFRICA



SAMIRA VERA-CRUZ
DIRECTOR, PRODUCER & FILMMAKER

As filmmakers, we often ask ourselves: Where does my project fit in the industry? This hands-on workshop was designed to help filmmakers refine their projects and develop a clear strategy for taking their documentary to the next stage. Participants submitted their projects in advance and received tailored feedback from the panel of experts.

CONGRESS

DAY TWO | 3 APRIL

STORIES FROM THE FIELD



ERIN RANNEY
PHOTOGRAPHY/ CINEMATOGRAPHER



SARA MATASICK
CINEMATOGRAPHER



GUNJAN MENON
IMPACT PRODUCER



PETER NDUNG'U
PHOTOGRAPHER & FILMMAKER



SHAMIER MAGMOET
UNDERWATER CINEMATOGRAPHER



LABDI OMMES
COMPOSER

Bringing Stories from the Field, the panel shared their personal experiences and insights. Exploring practical considerations like packing, risk assessments to ensure personal safety, feminine health and hygiene, problem-solving in the fields and remaining connected to your home and those you love, they importantly emphasised the undeniable responsibility of adopting ethical practices and overarching values that guide creatives in the field.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER



CHRISTIAN COOPER
WRITER



SEWELA MUTILENI
PHOTOGRAPHER, PRODUCER, DIRECTOR



CHRISTINE LIN
DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER, PRODUCER



NOMSA NKOMO
SCIENTIST / CONSERVATIONIST

The panel participants discussed the different experiences of unconventional birders and their journeys towards creating new birding cultures for their communities. The discussion explored how we can use birding and ornithology to build a community of people of colour towards a future where it is normalised globally. Issues of identity and finding community have long influenced the experiences of people within communities, or keep them out of ornithology and birding.



CONGRESS

DAY TWO | 3 APRIL

THE GULO FILM PHILOSOPHY: HOW TO MAKE BLUE-CHIP IF YOU'RE NOT THE BIG CHIPS

OLIVER GOETZL | CEO, GULO FILM PRODUCTIONS

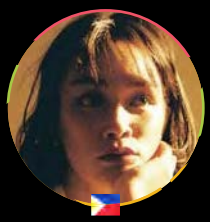


This high energy session includes a bit of everything... the Gulo way! From how to pan the camera and why (or why not), why use a viewfinder, the use of slowmotion, drones and remote controlled cameras and what exactly that means for the editing to even foley and sound recording.

FOLLOW THE WATER



DAVID LOUGHRAN
CURATOR AND CO-FOUNDER, EMERGING ISLANDS



SAMANTHA ZARANDIN
OPERATIONS & MARKETING DIRECTOR



MANDY BARKER
PHOTOGRAPHER



SHIN ARUNRUGSTICHAI
PHOTOJOURNALIST



MALIN FEZEHAI
PHOTOGRAPHER



HUIYING ORE
PHOTOGRAPHER



PABLO ALBARENGA
DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHER

What does it mean to FOLLOW THE WATER? It's an idea, an intention, a methodology. It's a call to action addressed to ecological storytellers from the global majority, whose processes and meanderings we hope to gather just like the tributaries and arroyos and swamps and tidal flats that weave a landscape together.

Emerging Islands invites everyone to FOLLOW THE WATER, a panel discussion with National Geographic Explorers Huiying Ore, Malin Fezehai, Mandy Barker, Pablo Albarenga and Shin Arunrugstichai, that traces the many ecological issues of water surrounding us, and the processes these storytellers have taken with photography to tell stories of communities, our ecologies, and the climate.

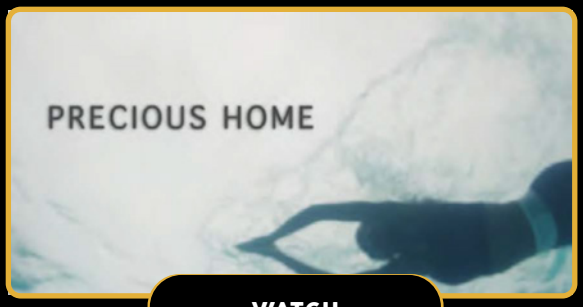


CONGRESS
FELLOWS // FILM TEASERS

What would Congress be without showing the product of our collective passion: films! The films and teasers in this years showcase were produced by fellows, and featured fellows and the local community and wildlife in ways that highlight the values held in this community. A precursor to the South South Ocean showcase, each film brings into focus the tremendous growth with regard to production quality.

The catalogue paints new light, joyous triumph and exciting innovation - using motion pictures to tell a thousand words about the power and growing value of peer-to-peer and industry mentorship, gear access, and access to wild spaces in weaving powerful, high-quality narratives for diverse global audiences. The result of more diverse crews - the quiet nuance, inclusivity and collaboration is articulated not in words but a as a natural thread in the fabric of these stories; sparking new inspiration and challenging observing fellows to craft the narratives only they can.

PRECIOUS HOME



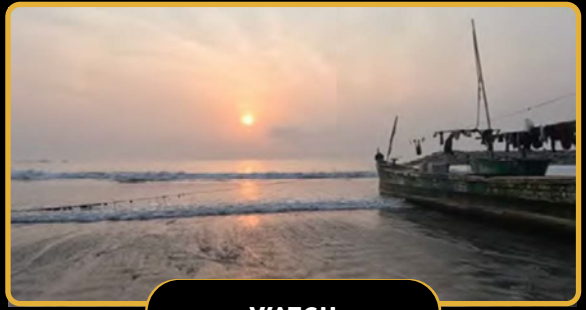
WATCH

ÉCHOS DES RÉCIFS



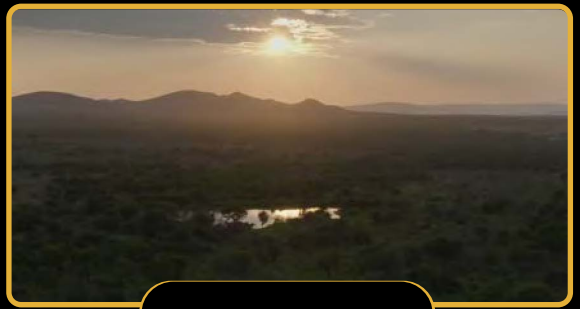
WATCH

THE REEF KEEPER



WATCH

GATHERING OF THE MAIDENS



WATCH

CONGRESS

DAY THREE | 4 APRIL

IN CONVERSATION WITH TORBIN BULLOCK



TORBIN BULLOCK
MOTION PICTURE EDITOR



MANU AKATSA
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER & CINEMATOGRAPHER

Manu Akatksa and Torbin Bullock drew the audience into an animated conversation (no pun intended) exploring the world of animation through their experiences. From Toy Story to WondLa, the beginnings of Pixar to million dollar box-office movies and YouTube releases - the audience had the opportunity to imagine the real world creative and administrative chaos that produces compelling storytelling.

SHAPING YOUR DOCUMENTARY FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT



TINY MUNGWE
PRODUCER



WANGECI MURAGE
CEO, MEDIA PROS AFRICA



SAMIRA VERA-CRUZ
DIRECTOR, PRODUCER & FILMMAKER

As filmmakers, we often ask ourselves: Where does my project fit in the industry? What format will give it the best chance to reach the right audience? This hands-on workshop was designed to help filmmakers refine their projects and develop a clear strategy for taking their documentary to the next stage. Participants submitted their projects in advance and received tailored feedback from our panel of experts.

CHARACTER & SEQUENCE BUILDING IN NATURAL HISTORY

GARY SMITH | PRODUCER/DIRECTOR



Producer and Director Gary Smith from Wildstar Films brought experiences from the likes of Queens (National Geographic, Disney+ and Hulu), Secrets of the Octopus (National Geographic) and Tiger (Disney+) to the audience to explore the dynamics of bringing authentic and engaging natural history characters and sequences to life.

CONGRESS

DAY THREE | 4 APRIL

THE EUROPEAN ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: INDUSTRY UPDATE



ANNE OLZMANN
MANAGING DIRECTOR & DISTRIBUTOR



CHRISTIAN COOLS
COMMISSIONING EDITOR BROADCASTER



JACKIE SAVERY
CREATIVE DIRECTOR



NICOLAS ZUNINO
PRODUCER

Wildlife television is shifting-creatively, financially, and politically. As co-productions evolve and new storytelling voices emerge, the industry faces big questions: Who gets to tell nature's stories? How do we fund bold ideas across borders? And what does truly collaborative filmmaking look like in practice? This conversation dived into the current commissioning landscape in Europe, and explored fresh models for financing and partnership, and asked to build a more inclusive and creatively ambitious future for wildlife storytelling.

ELEVATING A SENSE OF PLACE IN STORYTELLING



ADAM JENKINS
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CONSULTANT



VERONIQUE COUTTEE JENKINS
FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR, GEOSPATIAL EQUITY TECH



MUHA GOMATE
COMPOSER

Place Matters! Explore how bringing spatial concepts and technology together bring context and empower the storytelling process.



NEWF

Disclaimer: The featured map image is an ARCGIS research prototype for a long-term impact reporting and community building tool.

CONGRESS

DAY THREE | 4 APRIL

DIVING WITH A PURPOSE: IN CONVERSATION WITH KAMAU SADIKI

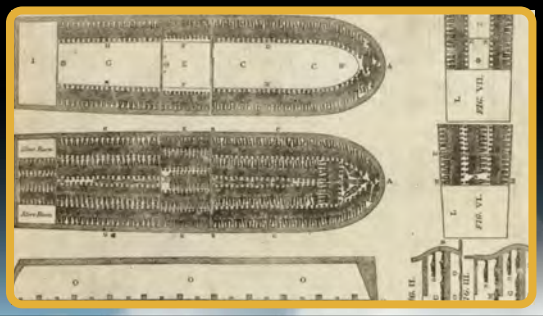


STEFANIE TITUS
NARRATIVE PRODUCER



KAMAU SADIKI
UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY
LEAD INSTRUCTOR

Many of us have a single experience - a journey that presents itself as a waterline separating the lives we know above the water, and the awakening of new depths below the surface. At the core of Diving With a Purpose, maritime archeology and deeply reflective work by Afro-descendant divers contributes to a more complete history that tells the stories of our enslaved ancestors. In an intimate, moving conversation, they explored how documenting the past brings stories about the African experience to life, fostering healing and ushering in a new era of connection between Africa and the diaspora.





CONGRESS

DAY THREE | 4 APRIL

THE DIGITAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE



INDY MITRA
POST PRODUCTION & OPERATIONS SUPERVISOR EDITOR



GEOFF LUCK
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER



MANU AKATSA
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER CINEMATOGRAPHER



REYHANEH MAKTOUFI
SCIENCE COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST



LUCIA TORRES
VIDEO MANAGING EDITOR

Social and Digital media have changed the way stories are told, consumed, and shared. How do nature and conservation filmmakers ensure their work is seen, shared, and remembered? Does success on social media mean sacrificing depth for clicks, or is there a way to balance impact and engagement? Moderated by Lucia Torres from Mongabay - one of the leading conservation & environment news platforms - this conversation sparked new ideas, challenged assumptions, and inspired the room as they explored breathtaking wildlife cinematography and multimedia journalism impact through the ever-evolving lens of social media.

GLOBAL SOUTH: OPPORTUNITIES, EXPLORATION & EXPRESSION



MARTIN DEL RIO
CEO, SANTIAGO WILD FEST & LADERA SUR



SHAHIDUL ALAM
PHOTOJOURNALIST

What connects us? What lies ahead? And how does a united vision define the power and impact of the stories we tell? With an evolving understanding of how we fit into each other's worlds, we explored the power of collaboration in the global south.

SOUTH TO SOUTH LAB

DE SUR A SUR

Across the Global South, communities share many deep-rooted connections to nature - shaped both by ancestral knowledge, colonial legacies, Afro-cultural links, linguistic richness, climate vulnerability and biodiversity loss due to exploitation.

To build cross-continental connections through ocean access and storytelling, NEWF, Santiago Wild and Ladera Sur partnered to support a cultural exchange at eKhaya that brought together 15 multidisciplinary fellows with unique ties to the sea.

Over 10 days in Sodwana Bay, they dived, learned, and filmed side by side - producing a powerful catalogue of short films that hold our gaze on Black joy, creativity, agency and ancestral connection to water; expanding the possibilities about who gets to tell our ocean stories, and how the people around us who we know, love and learn from are portrayed.

WATCH TEASERS









NEXT CHAPTER PITCH



Reintroducing the Live Pitch that sparked NEWF's narrative change journey in 2017, 12 shortlisted Next Chapter candidates had a two-day pitching workshop with mentor Geoff Luck who presented the daily live pitch event showcasing four compelling project ideas over three days that demonstrated innovation and passion for themes such as nature, wildlife, environmental challenges, conservation, and climate resilience - all through the lens of community-inclusive storytelling and protagonists. The esteemed jury put their experience to task to select the winning projects that will see its creators enter into a year-long fellowship to produce their films.

READ ARTICLE



NEXT CHAPTER PITCH JUDGES



WANGECI MURAGE

CEO, MEDIA PROS AFRICA

Wangeci Murage is a distinguished Broadcast Media Executive, Content Distribution Specialist, and Media Consultant with 25 years of experience in Africa's media landscape. As CEO of Media Pros Africa, she specializes in content distribution, marketing, media strategy, training, and event management. Wangeci has curated African content globally, including for Netflix, and launched Africa Magic Swahili on DStv. She led flagship productions at M-Net Africa and ZUKU TV, such as Big Brother Africa and Idols East Africa. Wangeci serves on advisory committees like Sunny Side of the Doc and has judged awards like the International Emmy and Africa Movie Academy Awards. With an MBA in Media Leadership, she mentors and promotes African storytelling globally.



TRIA THALMAN

PROGRAMMING DIRECTOR, JACKSON WILD

Originally from the UK, Tria is a 30-year veteran of the natural history filmmaking industry. She has produced, directed and written multiple science and wildlife documentaries for American networks. For eight years she was an executive producer at the Smithsonian Channel, where she oversaw all natural history content across both linear and digital platforms. Her films have garnered numerous awards in film festivals around the world, including an Emmy for the landmark blue-chip wildlife series Epic Yellowstone. She now works as an independent producer and media consultant while also serving as the director of programming for the 2025 Jackson Wild Summit.



AURÉLIE REMAN

COO, SUNNY SIDE OF THE DOC

Aurélie Reman is Managing Director of Doc Services, the organising company of Sunny Side of the Doc, Global Pitch, and Asian Side of the Doc. Her career took her to London in the video games industry, where she delivered marketing activities and campaigns at Sony Computer Entertainment Europe. Graduated from the Institut Français de Presse with a master's in journalism and intercultural communication, she has collaborated on documentary series and singles as a journalist and media researcher in Paris-based production companies.



SIFISO KHANYILE

DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, WRITER

Sifiso is an award-winning filmmaker, archive researcher and music records collector. His work is concerned with memory and history and how they continue to shape the contemporary imaginations of South Africa. He's produced 10 films, writing and directing 5 of those including the award-winning 'Uprize', and 'A New Country'. His recently completed short-film adaptation of Njabulo Ndebele's 'The Prophetess'; expands his vocabulary into the South African literary archive, having worked with audio and video archives in the past. His ongoing project 'Black Joy Under Apartheid' foregrounds black leisure and pleasure under apartheid to offer counter-hegemonic narratives to black victimhood.

TAKALANI MULAUDZI
Development Grant

NEWF Story Labs was proud to announce the recipient of the inaugural Takalani Mulaudzi Development Grant, a special initiative that celebrates and supports African storytellers developing powerful documentary feature films about the ocean.

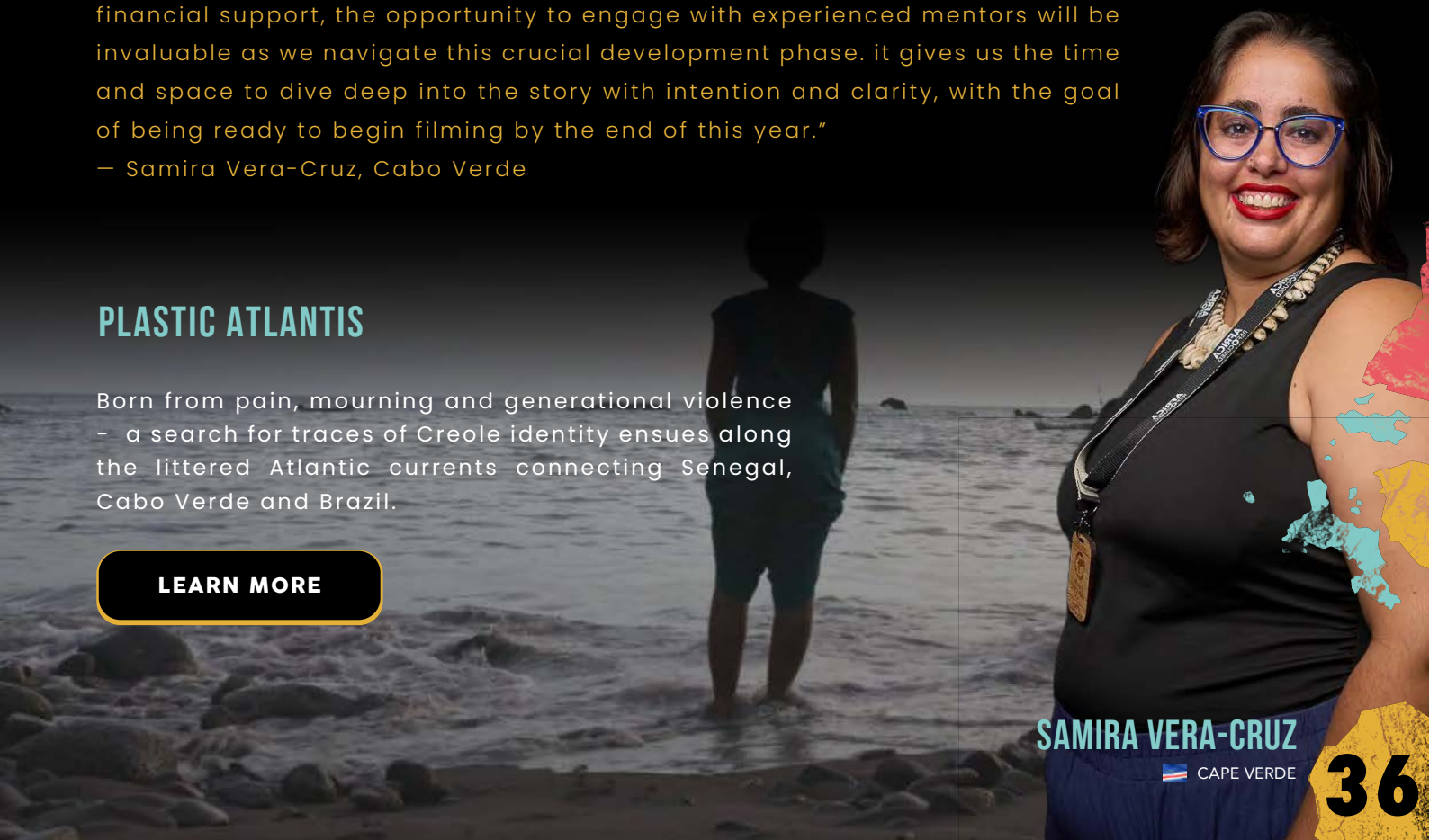


Honouring the legacy and spirit of Takalani Mulaudzi - a late matriarch of the South African film industry - this ZAR 250,000 (approx. USD 15,000) development grant was designed to support an African filmmaker with a proven track record to produce a teaser for a compelling ocean story.

"It's about bringing the stories that were never told to us to the people who deserve to hear them."
— The late Takalani Milly Mulaudzi, NEWF fellow, mentor & friend

Following a rigorous selection process that included selecting five (5) strong concepts and then moving them along to a second, independent jury - the grant has been awarded to Samira Vera-Cruz from Cabo Verde for her feature-length project Plastic Atlantis.

"Being awarded with this grant is an immense honour—and one i do not take lightly. i carry the deep hope that through this project, I will make Takalani proud. Beyond the financial support, the opportunity to engage with experienced mentors will be invaluable as we navigate this crucial development phase. it gives us the time and space to dive deep into the story with intention and clarity, with the goal of being ready to begin filming by the end of this year."
— Samira Vera-Cruz, Cabo Verde



PLASTIC ATLANTIS

Born from pain, mourning and generational violence - a search for traces of Creole identity ensues along the littered Atlantic currents connecting Senegal, Cabo Verde and Brazil.

LEARN MORE

SAMIRA VERA-CRUZ
CAPE VERDE

DRUM CEREMONY

Drumming has long been a vital part of African culture, communication, ceremony, and oral stprytelling. Across the continent and in the diaspora, drums have carried the heartbeat of communities - from the djembe of West Africa to the Ngoma of Southern Africa, each rhythm holds history, identity, and a deep sense of belonging, transcending generations as a rhythmic language of resilience and celebration.

At the NEWF Summit and Congress, this rich tradition closes the gatherig - not just as a performance, but as a shared, communal expression marking a new season for the storytellers, scientists, conservationists, and creatives present. It's a joyful moment that brings reminds everyone of the deeper purpose behind their work, and the importance of kthe momentum sparked when we gather in this way.





SOCIAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Articles & Media

LADERA SUR // NOEL KOK Y PRAGNA PARSOTAM-KOK LLEGAN A SANTIAGO WILD 2025: TRANSFORMANDO LA NARRATIVA AFRICANA EN LA CINEMATOGRAFÍA DE VIDA SILVESTRE

Realease Date: 04 May 2025

Para transformar la narrativa sobre la vida silvestre africana, los cineastas y exploradores de National Geographic, Noel Kok y Pragna Parsotam-Kok, fundaron en 2017 el Congreso de Cineastas de Naturaleza, Medio Ambiente y Vida Silvestre (NEWF).

To read in your language, consider adding an extension to translate.

READ ARTICLE

WATCH // KZN TOURISM & FILM: FROM OCEAN FLOORS TO BEHIND-THE-SCENES FILMMAKER TRAINING, THIS IS WHERE STORIES COME ALIVE — ONLY IN THE MAGICAL ZULU KINGDOM

Release date: 24 April 2025

Join Ryle De Morny as he takes us on a cinematic journey through Sodwana Bay — exploring the breathtaking landscapes, diving beneath the waves, and discovering NEWF's inspiring work - a game-changing platform for wildlife and conservation storytelling in Africa.

VIEW POST

IOL ARTICLE // NATURE, ENVIRONMENT AND WILDLIFE FILMMAKERS CONGRESS: A RESOUNDING SUCCESS IN DURBAN

Release date: 11 April 2025

8th annual Nature, Environment & Wildlife Filmmakers (NEWF) Congress held in Durban from 2-4 April last week hailed as a giant success. The NEWF Congress presents a platform for African storytellers, conservationists, and media professionals to engage and collaborate.

READ ARTICLE

SOCIAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Articles & Media

IOL ARTICLE // REVIVING AFRICAN STORYTELLING IN NATURE

Realease Date: 10 April 2025

A South African film initiative is reshaping the narrative of wildlife storytelling in Africa by empowering people who never had a chance to tell their stories from a local perspective.

READ ARTICLE

LISTEN // AFRICA RISE & SHINE: 8TH NATURE FILMMAKERS CONGRESS ADDRESSES CHALLENGES IN WILDLIFE FILMMAKING

Release date: 10 April 2025

Joining Asanda Beda to discuss the challenges faced by wildlife filmmakers on the continent is Pragna Parsotam-Kok, South African storyteller, film and television producer, co-founder and executive director of Nature Environment Wildlife Filmmakers.

VISIT

BLAZON MAGAZINE // NEWF 2025: BREAKING BARRIERS TO EMPOWER THE NEXT GENERATION OF WILDLIFE AND CONSERVATION STORYTELLERS, ACROSS AFRICA

Release date: 08 April 2025

Like NEWF's year-round programming, its signature event, NEWF Congress, is driven by a bold theory of change: by providing talented, diverse African storytellers with training, mentorship, and access, they will emerge as leaders in wildlife and natural history storytelling.

READ ARTICLE

SOCIAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Articles & Media

LISTEN // THE LUNCH BREAK WITH VARSHAN SOOKHUN

Realease Date: 03 April 2025

The 8th annual Nature Environment and Wildlife Filmmakers Fellows Summit and Congress is currently on in Durban till the 4th of April. Join Pragna Parsotam Kok - South African storyteller, film and television producer and serves as the co-founder and executive director of Nature Environment Wildlife Filmmakers (NEWF).

VIEW

KZN TOURISM & FILM // A UNIQUE UNDERWATER COLLABORATION BRINGS TOGETHER TOURISM AND FILM (PAGE 13)

Release date: 17 March 2025

Members of the media from SABC 2 and Expresso visited Sodwana to gain firsthand insight into the NEWF Programmes, which feature various Film Labs held at eKhaya with fellows from around the globe.

VIEW PAGE

Explore our Newsroom



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Juliette C.
Fellowship & Multimedia Editor @Mongabay
2 days ·

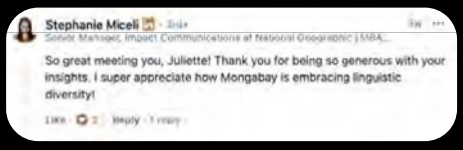
👡 Would you really like to be in my shoes? 👠

🍀 At the Nature Environment Wildlife Filmmakers 2025 Durban's Summit & Congress (in collaboration with National Geographic), my colleague Lucía Torres from Mongabay and I concocted a little role play called "Play ...



120k

SOME KEY REACTIONS


Stephanie Miceli
So great meeting you, Juliette! Thank you for being so generous with your insights. I super appreciate how Mongabay is embracing linguistic diversity!


Jabi Katy
You probably do not have an idea of how beautiful your presentation was to me, you have made pitching easy. I am so glad I participated in that session. Identifying a good story is one thing, pitching it to stakeholders is a whole different ball game.


Shuimo Trust Dohyee
I really enjoyed your session on pitching, Juliette and my chat with you was an eye opener. Thank you. Looking forward to start contributing for Mongabay.

POST BY : JULIETTE CHAPALAIN

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Media Pros Africa
1,147 followers
2 days ·

Reflecting on the incredible experience that was Nature Environment Wildlife Filmmakers in KwaZulu easily as it is one of the most impactful and well-curated events we have had the pleasure to attend...



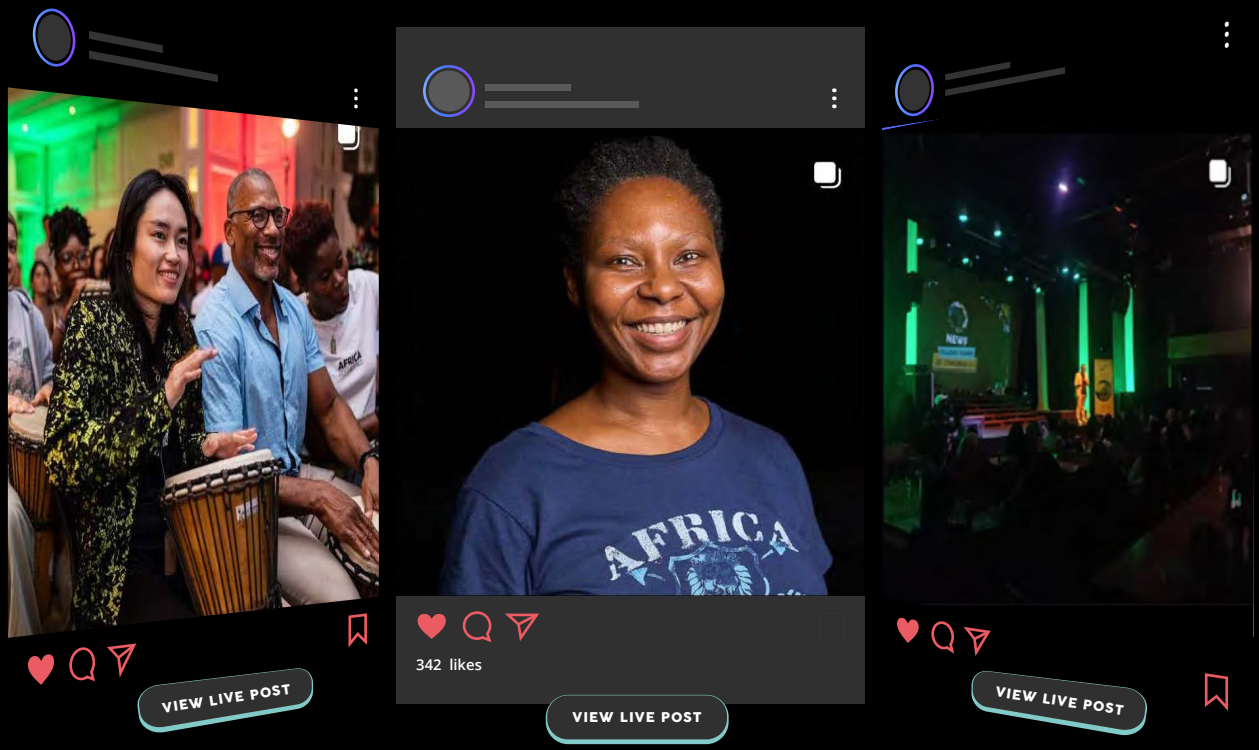
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POST BY : MEDIA PROS AFRICA

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POST BY : CHRISTINE LIN (@CHRRISCROSS)

being a part of the @newfcommunity reminded me of why it's so important, especially as filmmakers and photographers and scientists, to never stop sharing our stories with each other. I think of all the joy and energy that week in Durban brought us and I'm so grateful for having been able to take a little bit of that with me back home ❤️🌊

POST BY : THOBILE MPHANGA (@THOBIMAPHANGA)

Africa, we are Beauty, and we are Fire.
Ngiyanithanda
Ngiyabonga
Ngiyazithoba

POST BY : GAIL KELAPILE (@GAIL_BEHINDTHELENS)

Five days surrounded by brilliant minds ,powerful stories, and a shared love for Africa. I am grateful to be part of the NEWF Community. Each moment has been a reminder of why our voices matter and how storytelling can shift perspectives and spark change. I'm incredibly grateful for the reunions with the creative hearts that I have journeyed with before and the new connections that sparked fresh ideas and possibilities. I am truly blessed.

SOCIAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS







POST BY : FILBERT MINJA (@FILBERTMINJA_)

As part of the 1st Cohort of the NEWF Reimagining African Narratives Photography Fellowship, Bayala Game Reserve brought everything, deep dives into decolonizing African stories, mastering photo sequencing, and adding layers to our visual language. But the real spark? Late-night brainstorms, laughter, and creative breakthroughs with mentors and fellows.Leaving with sharper skills, new perspectives, and a fire to create. 📸✨

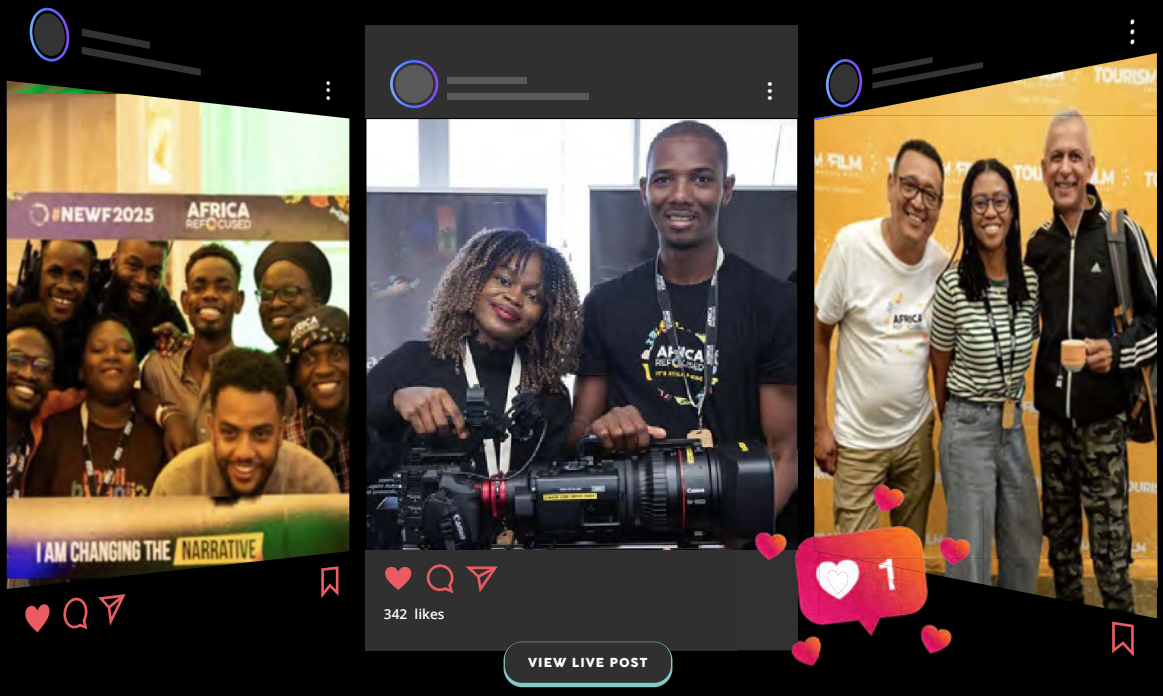
POST BY : THEMBALAMA SHENGE (@ZENKOSI_FILMS)

What a time to be alive and dreaming!
At #NEWF2025, we were held in a space of learning, laughter, deep connection, and reconnection.To be seen, to be heard, and to be celebrated. What an honor! We are humbled and overjoyed to have been chosen as one of the winners of the Next Chapter Pitch.
A seed has been planted, and we cannot wait to bring this story to life.
Thank you for curating a space where African storytellers can exist, create, and reclaim our place in environmental, conservation, and wildlife narratives. SIYABONGA ❤️

POST BY : MEYTAM KHIZE (@MEYTAMKHIZE)

“I am feeling very inspired to continue to create, to continue to create work that speaks to nature conservation, that speaks to connecting humans to nature and exploring what climate creativity is - and what that means for someone who is in the science space but at the same time understands how time, memory, space,spirit and imagination can create new worlds.”

SOCIAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



POST BY : KZN TOURISM AND FILM (@FILMINKZN)

#NEWF2025 is here!
The NEWF Summit & Congress 2025 officially launched on Monday, 31 March, setting the stage for another groundbreaking gathering of Global nature, environment, and wildlife storytellers.The KZN Tourism & Film Authority is proud to support this transformative platform, which amplifies voices that preserve and promotes Africa's natural heritage through impactful storytelling that drives awareness and change.

Empowering African storytellers to tell our own narratives about nature and conservation and fostering Pan African and global collaborations.



SOCIAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

INSTA GRID



Africa Refocused, Reimagined, and Rising Together at #NEWF2025

The 8th NEWF Fellows Summit and Congress emerged as a culturally vibrant, supportive and engaging source of community, connection and creative energy once again. Curated to respond to the evolving needs of fellows, covering everything from storytelling craft, pitching strategies and collaborative production approaches - to inviting the industry to join the conversation reimagining the future of community-inclusive, African-led storytelling, science and art.

NEWF STORY-ARC

VIEW POST



#NEWF2025

View our Pixieset Gallery

DOWNLOAD PIN : 8796

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To our fellows, thought partners, supporters, and funders, thank you for walking alongside us. Your commitment enables this community to reimagine belonging, creativity and collaboration - to dream deeper, speak louder, and rise higher.

AFRICA REFOCUSED
A COLLABORATION BETWEEN NEWF NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

TOURISM & FILM KWAZULU-NATAL
Magical. Zulu Kingdom.

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I AM CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

















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