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RESTORATION OF PARADISE



Year Released: 2014

MPAA Rating: Unrated

Running Time: 50 minutes

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Directed by Russ Emanuel

Written by Russ Emanuel, David Carlberg

Narrated by Robert Picardo

Russ Emanuel's nature documentary, *Restoration of Paradise*, takes a look at Southern California's Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve and Wetlands, a complex ecological system just thirty miles away from downtown Los Angeles. Narrated by Robert Picardo, the documentary explores the area's history, from Native American settlements to oil fields to its eventual restoration and existence as a modern-day bird sanctuary. Along the way you're also introduced to the various plants and animals that call the wetlands home, from stingrays and sea bass (and the occasional visit by a dolphin or shark) to the over 200 species of birds in the area.

As far as documentaries go, this one eschews sexiness for exhaustive information. This is the type of film middle or high school students might watch in class prior to a field trip to the wetlands. Alternatively, this is something you can imagine being sold in a gift shop dedicated to the area. Which is to say, it is educational and informative, but in a very calming and dry way.

Footage is complemented by Robert Picardo's soothing voice, while gentle-on-the-ears music floats underneath. Imagery is of the different flora and fauna; when the area's humanity-related history is discussed, still images and archival material fill in the visual gaps. Overhead geological maps make sure to show you precisely what area of California is being discussed (and are a little over-utilized). Some interviews are included with local residents, and wetlands experts and conservationists, but it still feels predominantly academic despite this human touch.

I don't know that this is the type of film that has wide appeal; its almost clinical demeanor might make it tedious for those less-inclined, and it's not quite energetic enough for the type of nature doc fare you regularly see on cable TV. At the same time, it doesn't skimp on the education, is full of beautiful imagery and is a comprehensive introduction to the Bolsa Chica Wetlands, an area that I didn't even know existed until watching this film.

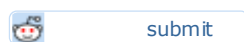
Ultimately, *Restoration of Paradise* delivers a dry experience that is aimed less at entertaining than educating. Which is fine, if this type of nature documentary is your thing or, as mentioned above, you've visited the Bolsa Chica Wetlands before and are looking for more information about the area's history, or just would like a souvenir. If that was the type of film the filmmakers wanted to make, they absolutely nailed it. I like a bit more energy and pace to my documentaries, but I respect this for what it is.

This film was submitted for review through our [Submission for Review](#) system. If you have a film you'd like us to see, and we aren't already looking into it on our own, you too can utilize this service.

Posted on April 2, 2014 in [Reviews](#) by [Mark Bell](#)



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