

**NEWS RELEASE  
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**Contact:** Carrie Richer  
Artistic Director  
International Wildlife Film Festival  
Tel: **406.728.9380 ext 202**  
[carrie@wildlifefilms.org](mailto:carrie@wildlifefilms.org)  
[www.wildlifefilms.org](http://www.wildlifefilms.org)

**46<sup>th</sup> International Wildlife Film Festival Announces Winners**

MISSOULA, MT— The 46th International Wildlife Film Festival announced the winners of the 2023 event at the festival awards ceremony on Sunday night. One winner was selected in each of 12 categories with an additional jury award and the Chuck Jonkel Legacy Award for deserving recipients.

This year's jury was made up of Tailyr Irvine, Salish and Kootenai journalist and co-founder of Indigenous Photograph; Deia Schlosberg, Emmy-winning documentary producer and filmmaker (*The Story of Plastic*); and Andy Maser, Emmy-winning director and cinematographer (*Great Bear Rainforest*).

"The winners this year are exciting to me - they all have incredible positive energy. I do think that it is a hard line to walk - to be honest about the environmental crisis we are in but to find positivity," says IWFF Director Carrie Richer. "I think audiences are thirsty for work that is honest, and accurate yet somehow finds a positive story. Our Best of Festival, *Earthbound: Nzambi Matee* - is just that. The Best of Festival winner highlights the insurmountable Nzambi Matee who seems as if she is just getting started. I hope there are more films of this incredible quality to come - don't miss it."

Special awards screenings of select winning films will happen at The Roxy Theater on Saturday, April 29th. The majority of the selections and award winners from the 46th Annual IWFF are available to watch during the IWFF Virtual Festival which runs from April 29- May 5, online and available worldwide. Virtual tickets and festival information are available at [wildlifefilms.org](http://wildlifefilms.org).

**Best Short Short  
HEART OF MAUI**

**Best Short  
FLIGHTPATH**

**Best Feature  
BIOCÉTRICOS**

**Best Series  
SECRETS OF THE ELEPHANTS SERIES**

**Best Student Film  
JAWAI**

**Best Youth Program**  
**KANGAROO VALLEY**

**Best New Vision**  
**ALL OF OUR HEARTBEATS ARE CONNECTED THROUGH EXPLODING STARS**

**Best Living with Wildlife Program**  
**PATH OF THE PANTHER**

**Best Animal Behavior Program**  
**LION: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MARSH PRIDE**

**Best Wildlife Conservation Program**  
**HEART OF MAUI**

**Best Sustainable Planet**  
**EARTHBOUND: NZAMBI MATEE**

**Best of Festival**  
**EARTHBOUND: NZAMBI MATEE**

**Special Jury Award**  
**Zacharia Mutai of the OI Pejeta Conservancy**

*Jury Statement:* Being a caregiver for any other being is already a monumental task, but when that other being is the last of its kind - the last of an entire species...the gravity of that charge is utterly inconceivable to all but a tiny handful of people. As the head rhino keeper [at OI Petaja Conservancy], Mr. Mutai bears that burden on behalf of the entire human race, and as we saw in Remembering Sudan, he does so with a gentleness and grace that bestows dignity upon the precious individuals within his care. Zacharia, on behalf of the IWFF, thank you for your passion, your sacrifices, and your great strength.

**The Chuck Jonkel Legacy Award**  
**Roy O'Connor**

*IWFF Statement:* The Chuck Jonkel Legacy Award was presented to Roy O'Connor for his steadfast belief in the festival for over 20 years. Roy's tenure on the IWFF and Roxy Theater Board of Directors contributed to the IWFF's legacy at the Roxy. Mr. O'Connor's dedication to the festival mirrors his own values of working toward conserving wildlife and habitat and educating communities about those values through cinema.

**Upcoming Screenings of Winning Films at The Roxy Theater:**

- HEART OF MAUI, 4/27 at 4pm
- FLIGHTPATH, 4/27 at 7:30pm
- BIOCÉNTRICOS, 4/25 at 5:15pm
- SECRETS OF THE ELEPHANTS SERIES: DESERT & RAINFOREST, 4/25 at 7:30pm
- JAWAI, 4/27 at 4:30pm
- PATH OF THE PANTHER, 4/26 at 5:15pm
- EARTHBOUND: NZAMBI MATEE, 4/26 at 8:15pm
- Additional award-winning film screenings will be announced Thursday, April 27

Founded in 1977 at the University of Montana, IWFF is the first and longest running event of its kind. The vision of the IWFF will always be to foster an engaged, enlightened community that finds itself through cinema, and helps the planet to heal. The mission of the International Wildlife Film Festival is to promote awareness, knowledge, and understanding of wildlife, habitat, people, and nature through excellence in film. For more information visit [wildlifefilms.org](http://wildlifefilms.org).