

# Animal PRIDE

Nature comes out of the Closet

*In Animal Pride, we follow Queer wildlife biologist and educator Connel Bradwell on a journey to investigate the true diversity of gender and sexuality in nature. By uncovering lost narratives and celebrating groundbreaking science, he sheds light on research that is revolutionising how we see the natural world.*

**A 44" television documentary for CBC's The Nature of Things for international presale as 52" version.**

*By the Producers of:*  
Carbon - The Unauthorized Biography,  
Equus - Story of the Horse and  
The Great Human Odyssey

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 Handful of Films


Photo: Alexander Schimmeck



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**In Animal Pride**, we follow **Connel Bradwell (he/him)**, a Queer wildlife biologist and educator, on a fun and fascinating journey from the urban old growth forests of Vancouver to the remote shores of Antarctica to understand a vital issue: where do diverse gender expressions and queer sexual behaviors exist throughout the animal kingdom and why have we been missing them? We meet Connel on Vancouver Island, where he supports orca research and, while out in the field, made an astounding observation: orca exhibiting same-sex behaviour. On the boat, we hear about his personal connection to the journey he is embarking on, and why seeing queerness in nature for the first time had such an impact on him as a gay wildlife biologist.



“One of my favourite things about nature is that there is always something new to learn. No matter how much you think you know, and just when you think you have it figured out, it finds a way to pull the rug from beneath you. And recently this happened in a major way - I saw same-sex behaviours happening in the natural world, and I cannot stop thinking about whether this is happening on a wider scale.”

**CONNEL BRADWELL**

Connel's journey is starting right here in his backyard. From the remote west coast, we cut to downtown Vancouver where we meet Connel's friend, a drag performer and Queer naturalist, **Batty B Banks (Jaylen Bastos) (they/them)**. When not performing drag, Jaylen runs queer wildlife walks in Vancouver and we see them together as they walk through Stanley Park, where Jaylen shows us ways in which queerness exists in many species including fungi, swans, banana slugs, and raccoons. **They show us that Queer wildlife is all around us, you just have to know where to look and who to ask.** Now that he understands ways that Queerness is present in nature through gender, sex, and behavior, Connel wants to know: where this has been studied, and by whom?



We have learned that Queerness is an integral part of nature, and now there's no going back.

Our next stop is Hawaii in search of Laysan Albatross. We meet **Dr. Lindsay Young (she/her)**, a biologist who has studied the Laysan Albatross colony at Kaena Point for about a decade. We discover that whilst monitoring the breeding behaviour of these birds, Lindsay uncovered remarkable information: one third of Laysan Albatross pairs raising chicks, previously assumed to be male-female, are in fact female-female pairs. Connel is stunned to see wild same-sex albatross courting, raising young and returning to the same mate year after year.

From Hawaii, we then head to Arashiyama National Park in Japan to meet **Dr. Paul Vasey (he/him)**, who studies a species famous for its queer behaviour. Connel is here to better understand the diversity of homosexual behaviour, focused not on parenting or pairing, but on pleasure. For the last 15 years, Paul has been studying Japanese macaques, a loveable two-and-a-half-foot-tall, pink-faced monkey, focusing on why female macaques mount one another during mating season.

Among the macaques with Paul, Connel learns that until recently, the scientific discourse on homosexuality in animals has focused on rationalizations for these behaviours, or explaining the gay away, instead of acknowledging it as part of a spectrum of natural variation in sexuality.

From Japan, Connel heads to the archives looking for scientific sources of early observations of same-sex behaviours in nature. At the Natural History Museum in London, we see Connel in the heart of London's gay district. He explains how whilst London is a hub for the Queer community, this has not always been the case. On the front steps of the impressive museum, we meet **Douglas Russell (he/him)**, the museum's Senior Curator of Birds. Douglas shows Connel a notepad of George Murray Levick, a member of Captain Scott's famous 1911-12 polar team to Antarctica. The notes reveal that Levick witnessed male Adélie penguins at Cape Adare, having sex with other males. **Levick blamed these "astonishing depravities" on "hooligan males" and wrote his findings in Greek to intentionally obscure them.** His report was never published. Instead, conventional biases in science chose to hide the evidence of queer behaviour in nature.

With the disturbing realisation that scientists have hidden important scientific observations, Connel concludes that he will go to Antarctica to meet Levick's "*depraved hooligan penguins*" and the people studying them today. In Antarctica, he meets Queer wildlife biologist **Ignacio Juarez Martínez (he/him)**, who is continuing the study of Adélie penguins on the peninsula. Ignacio and Connel set up cameras surrounded by loud and messy but charismatic penguin pairs. **While scientists like Levick hid their research findings because of social norms and homophobia, a new generation of scientists is open to what nature is showing us.** The discovery of Levick's research only spurred Ignacio on to be a better scientist and right the wrongs of Levick's research. With the urgency of climate change driving us, these researchers won't be hiding what they find in the vaults of the Natural History Museum. Connel helps Ignacio to collect data on the penguins, they both joke about what Levick would think of two proud Queer scientists working together on the same species he studied.



We return to Vancouver Island in Canada as Connel brings his profound discoveries back home to his own work as a naturalist, biologist and educator. Connel reflects on the importance of queerness in nature to his career and his own life. This experience has changed his relationship with nature and he describes feeling more comfortable than ever before in the natural world. We have learned that Queerness is an integral part of nature, and now there is no going back.

## Main Character and Narrator: Connel Bradwell

Connel is a British born Canadian wildlife biologist and educator living on Vancouver Island. His research has focused predominantly on the behaviors of endangered orca and migratory bird populations. Connel produced and hosted Out & About, a digital series on CBC, looking at the unique relationships LGBTQ2S+ Canadians have with the natural world. He contributed to and has produced content for CBC's nature campaign Hello Spring and co-produced and hosted the CBC Vancouver series Coastlines, he currently creates one off wildlife videos across their platforms. Connel creates educational wildlife content on multiple platforms, including managing accessible wildlife education programs to students across British Columbia and hosting livestream wildlife lessons to thousands of young people across Canada.

## Production Company: Handful of Films

Specialist science and nature producer Handful of Films is known for intelligent, ambitious, and impactful documentary storytelling. Winner of 7 Canadian Screen Awards for Best Science and Nature Program, Best Cinematography and Best Original Score for the recent documentaries The Great Human Odyssey, The Perfect Runner, and Equus - Story of the Horse, we reached new heights in 2019, with a win at Sundance for Fast Horse and our second Emmy nomination for Transplanting Hope. We work with CBC's The Nature of Things, PBS NOVA and Nature, The Smithsonian Channel, ZDF, Arte and other major broadcasters and distributors.

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 **Handful of Films**

