

NATURE . WILDLIFE

ONCE UPON A TIME IN TSAVO

52', 2 x 52' (ENG, GER)



In arid regions across Africa, a remarkable relationship between elephants and termites creates a waterhole – a green oasis which is central to every animal's life.

This story follows an extraordinary community of creatures, that call the waterhole 'home' over a season in their lives. They range from a family of elephants to a pair of hornbills (aka 'Zazu' of The Lion King) alongside dung-beetles, chameleons, bullfrogs, geese and killifish. Their Tsavo waterhole home exists for just a few months each year. One moment it's a dusty depression in a parched landscape, the next a bustling oasis.

The elephant family provides the background. They are the 'architects' and heavy lifters, but the intriguing narrative centres on the characters that live alongside them – at elephant toe-nail height. The behaviours and interactions are new and exciting, many have never been filmed before and some even new to science...



Original Title: Eine Perle im Sand

Year: 2022

Produced by: Waterhole Films Ltd, Terra Mater Studios, NHK, The WNET Group

1. A Time of Plenty

Dust, sand and blistering heat - it's dry season in Tsavo. The drought makes life difficult for many creatures, and the parched landscape itself is also thirsty for water. Without the precious wet there is no existence in the long run - all the more important are the few water points for the inhabitants of Tsavo. The first episode shows how the rare, but all the more heavy rains affect Kenya's plants and wildlife.

2. Survival

The sky darkens as huge flocks of red-billed weavers arrive at the waterhole in Kenya's Tsavo National Park at the beginning of the dry season. The birds come from the north, where they have raised their young in huge breeding colonies. Now parents and offspring are in search of food - and water. Each of these birds, which are about the size of a sparrow, takes only a few beaks full of water, but in total such a flock drinks thousands of liters a day - no wonder that the waterhole is shrinking ever faster and this oasis in the wilderness is threatened. In the second episode it becomes clear that, in view of the onset of the dry season, it is a matter of sheer survival for the animals and plants at the waterhole. When the rain returns at the end, the eternal circle of becoming and passing is closed.