



the future is the sound of silence.

SongbirdSOS

A Su Rynard documentary

World Broadcast Premiere
CBC-TV The Nature of Things
Thursday March 19, 2015
8:00pm

Director Su Rynard, Dr. Bridget Stutchbury, and eco-toxicologist
Christy Morrissey, are all available for interviews.

(Toronto – March 3, 2015) Birdsong that has graced the Earth for millions of years - and for all of human history - could soon be stilled in a human-made perfect-storm of negligence and unintended consequences.

Directed by Su Rynard, ***SongbirdSOS*** is the artfully-shot story of the mass depletion of songbirds in the Americas, an alarming thinning of populations that has seen declines of many species since the 1960s. According to international birding expert Dr. Bridget Stutchbury, who is featured in the documentary, we may have lost almost half the songbirds that filled the skies fifty years ago.

SongbirdSOS, which debuts on CBC-TV's **The Nature Of Things - March 19, 2015**, is a wide-ranging zoological whodunit that takes the viewer through a stunning variety of human-made perils that have afflicted species from warblers to orioles to grosbeaks to thrushes. On a hopeful note, it also shines a light on some ingenious approaches to the threat, and the on-the-ground heroes making them happen.

Songbird hazards include: glass-enclosed high-rise buildings that account for up to a billion bird deaths annually, light pollution that disorients birds' migratory flight paths, lost breeding and wintering habitats from rain forests to wetlands to boreal forests, oil pipelines and farm pesticides. And contributing to the declines are cats; believed to cause at least another billion bird deaths per year.

There's unforgettable real-time frontline research in ***SongbirdSOS***. Michael Mesure of the volunteer army FLAP (Fatal Light Awareness Program) Canada shows a toll of thousands of birds on a tour of particularly lethal Toronto buildings, along with some buildings that have been made less so by design. In Saskatchewan avian eco-toxicologist Christy Morrissey discovers lethal neonicotinoids in the spring wetland water supply, ahead of its annual application by local farmers. In a revelatory sequence, Bridget Stutchbury equips northern Purple Martins with micro-chip backpacks that reveal the secrets of their oddly-non-linear migratory journeys to South America and back.

In collaboration with scientists at AFAR, ***SongbirdSOS*** also filmed songbirds in night flight using a super slow motion camera, resulting in spectacular images.

And there's a glimpse of hope for the future, as Costa Rican coffee farmers learn from ornithologist Alejandra Martinez-Salinas about the benefits of pesticide-free shade-grown coffee. The diversity of shade trees could provide the birds better habitat and the songbirds' appetite for insects can care of pests, making it less essential to spray with agro-chemicals.

Over the course of a year, following the seasons and the birds, Director Su Rynard and the team set out on a journey of discovery.

"We discovered that the causes of songbird declines are many, and the solutions are few," states Rynard. "Yet everywhere we went, we met passionate people who are concerned and are working for change – as this is not just about the future of birds, it's about the health of the planet too."

Directed by Su Rynard.

Written by Su Rynard and Sally Blake

*Produced by Joanne Jackson, Sally Blake and Martin de la Fouchardière,
Diane Woods and Su Rynard*



SongbirdSOS is an international treaty co-production between Canada and France, produced by SongbirdSOS Productions and Films à Cinq.

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and with the participation of Rogers Documentary Fund, Ontario Media Development Corporation, Canada Media Fund, CNC, Telefilm International Co-production office, Rogers Telefund, Procirep, Angoa, The Documentary Organization of Canada, and ZED.*

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For more info, request screener for review purposes, set up an interview, get GAT:

Ingrid Hamilton | ingrid@gat.ca | 416-731-3034

Daniela Ponce | dania@gat.ca | 647-239-3034

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