“I hadn’t been to the Alaska Peninsula before, so flying to the site in the Cessna—which of course reminded me of all the travel I did in Africa in those little planes—was just incredible. Flying over the volcanoes, looking down at the ocean, seeing the islands and the spread of the land that was so wild and so uninhabited for many miles was really exciting. It gave me a feeling that I don’t often have these days.”

~ Dr. Jane Goodall, Disneynature Ambassador

PRODUCTION NOTES

“Bears” captures the fast-moving action and suspense of life in one of the planet’s last great wildernesses—Alaska. “Bears are a symbol of North America,” says director Alastair Fothergill. “We want to take audiences to one of the most beautiful places in the world—an area people hope to visit, but never do. Now they can see Alaska through the eyes of a mother bear and her cubs.”

“The brown bear is strong and intelligent, gentle and incredibly social,” adds director Keith Scholey. “And unlike any other animal, they hold a special place in our hearts—we all had a teddy bear growing up. Bears are perfect for storytelling.”

In an epic story of breathtaking scale, Disneynature’s upcoming True Life Adventure “Bears” showcases a year in the life of a bear family as two impressionable young cubs are taught life’s most important lessons. Set against a majestic backdrop teeming with life, their journey begins as winter comes to an end and the bears emerge from hibernation to face the bitter cold. The world outside is exciting—but risky—as the cubs’ playful descent down the mountain carries with it a looming threat of avalanches. As the
season changes from spring to summer, the brown bears must work hard to find food—ultimately feasting at a plentiful salmon run—while staying safe from rival male bears and predators, including an ever-present wolf.

Filmmakers hope to show moviegoers the true dynamic of the brown bear. Says Scholey, “A lot of people think that we’re crazy to film bears on location in such a remote area. But these animals don’t deserve the reputation they have. They are not out to hurt people. They are big, powerful animals with a remarkably gentle nature. We never felt threatened by the bears.”

“We were able to capture incredible footage of this mother’s plight to feed her cubs,” says Fothergill. “It’s a terrible dilemma she faces—wherever there’s food, there’s danger. And when she’s able to find refuge, there’s not much food. Every parent can relate to her struggle in a way. We all face tough choices every day and sometimes just have to hope we’re doing what’s best.”

Narrator John C. Reilly agrees. “I remember going to New York City for the first time with little kids. It might as well have been bears on the street. I can absolutely relate to the protective feelings a mother bear gets when looking after little ones.”

Reilly, who lent his voice to Ralph in Disney’s “Wreck-It Ralph,” returned to the recording studio for “Bears.” “With these bears,” he says, “it almost looks like there’s a person inside—the way that they move, relax, play and eat. They enjoy themselves. They take big naps after Thanksgiving dinner like my whole family does.”

“Disneynature’s film ‘African Cats’ was a big drama with a lot of action and big characters,” says Scholey. “And ‘Chimpanzee’ was a far gentler film that was often very funny. What we love about ‘Bears’ is that it’s really the best of both worlds.”


SEE “BEARS,” PROTECT OUR NATIONAL PARKS invites moviegoers to see the film during opening week (April 18-24, 2014) and Disneynature, through the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund, will make a contribution to the National Park Foundation, the official charity of America’s national parks, to protect wildlife and wild places across America’s national park system. “We can’t wait to share these bears’ fascinating behaviors and innate curiosity as they navigate a beautiful but challenging world,” says Alan Bergman, president of The Walt Disney Studios. “We are committed to protecting the environment and inspiring Disneynature fans to take part in conservation by joining forces with organizations like the National Park Foundation to preserve the natural world.”

ON LOCATION
Alaska Welcomes Filmmakers with Unpredictable Weather, Confident Wolves and a Massive Brown Bear Community

“You can eat your turkey sandwich 10 feet away from a bear in this area and he won’t react because he doesn’t consider you or the sandwich a food source.” ~ Naturalist Guide Simyra Taback-Hlebechuk

The Alaska Peninsula, stretching 500 miles southwest of mainland Alaska, lies between the Pacific Ocean and Bristol Bay. “The backdrop is breathtaking,” says director Alastair Fothergill. “The mountain scenery, volcanoes, glaciers and coastline together make an extremely beautiful place. It’s one of these mystical places that will be truly stunning on the big screen. What more could you ask for?”

“I hadn’t been to the Alaska Peninsula before,” says Disneynature ambassador Dr. Jane Goodall, “so flying to the site in the Cessna—which, of course, reminded me of all the travel I did in Africa in those little planes—was just incredible. Flying over the volcanoes, looking down at the ocean, seeing the islands and the spread of the land that was so wild and so uninhabited for many miles was really exciting. It gave me a feeling that I don’t often have these days.”

KATMAI NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE

The picturesque and bountiful environment is home to wildlife refuges, including Katmai National Park and Preserve, which covers more than 4 million acres and features the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes, created when Mount Katmai and Novarupta both erupted in 1912. Katmai, accessible only by small aircraft or a rather arduous boat trek, features unpredictable weather with temperatures ranging between 45 and 70 degrees from late spring through summer, though filmmakers experienced both heavy snowfall and almost balmy conditions with temperatures topping 75 degrees during production. Extreme rain, wind and fog frequently delayed filming—and prevented the production team from coming and going (as the plane needed proper conditions to fly and land safely).

Famous for its brown bear population—and estimated 2000 live in the park—Katmai is home to a diverse array of animal species—eagles, moose, foxes, wolves, river otters and, during late summer, an abundance of salmon, a personal favorite of bears that keeps them coming back to the area year after year. The area is one of the few places where people are able to commingle with bears—and perhaps the only place on the planet to capture the interactions between wolves and bears fishing—all of which made it particularly appealing to filmmakers.

“Katmai is one of those magical places that’s like going back in time in North America,” says director Keith Scholey. “There are not very many places in the world so remote. There is no negative human impact, so the bears don’t really react to people at all. We could wander the area and the bears would largely ignore us, and do whatever it is they do when nobody’s looking. For wildlife filmmakers, that’s the perfect situation—a place where we’re effectively invisible and we can capture bear society as it plays out.”
Choosing the best place to film “Bears” was imperative. “While Alaska is the classic place to see brown bears, it’s remarkably vast,” says co-director Adam Chapman.

HALLO BAY

According to Chapman, one bay in particular seemed to feature a jackpot for hungry bears. “There’s a fantastic meadow system where bears will flock early in the season to eat sedge grass,” he says. “Then there are the mud flats at the coastline, which are riddled with clams when the tide goes out. A bootleg nearby lets moms with spring cubs get up high where they can see potential threats. And the final elements that made filming so special there were the creek and river that have extraordinary runs of salmon every summer—pretty much like clockwork—creating a fishing bonanza with bears feeding alongside wolves. We spent a lot of time filming along that coastline. It’s so remote—just getting there is an adventure.”

Traveling to this key shooting site was an arduous process, culminating in a 60- to 90-minute flight aboard a bush plane that landed on the beach. This leg of the journey depended heavily on the weather, which changed frequently. Departures were tentative, often requiring hourly weather checks in search of a safe window in which to fly and land the small aircraft. Once on the ground on location, the production team carried all of their gear to camp on foot, and to subsequent filming locations, logging hundreds of miles during the 10-month shoot, which took place over the course of two summers.

“I think the starting point with any wildlife film is a team of people who really understand their subject,” says Scholey. “We also joined forces with people who run a camp in the area and are very experienced with the bears in the area.”

Naturalist guide Simyra Taback-Hlebechuk, who has been a guide at Hallo Bay Bear Camp for a dozen years, says the bears in Katmai are unique. “These bears along the coast have never experienced the food that people eat, so we can co-exist with them very well. You can eat your turkey sandwich 10 feet away from a bear in this area, and they won’t react because they don’t consider you or the sandwich a food source.”

Members of the production team took great care to maintain the area’s relationship between man and bear—catching every last crumb to dispose of properly at camp, and following the guide’s instructions when encountering bears. The team was accompanied at all times by a naturalist guide, who—thanks to years of experience—know the best places to catch bear activity, weighing facts like the season, the weather, the tide and recent events in the area. “Our job takes a lot of patience,” says Taback-Hlebechuk. “It requires a deep understanding of the environment. We have to be extremely observant—taking note of everything, not just the bears and their behavior, but the sounds and smells. We can tell if a bear has been through an area in the morning if the dew has been shaken off the grass.”

The guides are not only aware of the well-traveled bear trails, they use them. “We always walk on the bear trails,” says Taback-Hlebechuk. “It might take a little longer to get to a certain location, but we don’t want to add another footprint. When we see a
bear off in the distance, we stop and sit down, which is a very non-confrontational body language to a bear. They do it to each other to signal their intentions, and we mimic the behavior."

“The guides in this area have made the conditions there predictable for the animals,” adds Scholey. “Animals hate unpredictability. We all hate unpredictability. So if you make the circumstances so predictable when it comes to humans and bears occupying the same space, the animals can come around, see humans and behave as they would normally behave.”

Another way to assure the bears that the production team did not pose a threat was to avoid walking directly at an animal, opting instead to approach on a curve. “When we felt we were a comfortable distance from a bear—we’d sit down and try not to make any sudden movements,” says Taback-Hlebechuk. “Eventually, the bears would come to us.”

She says most of the bears in the area were familiar with her team after years of picking up their scents and sounds. As a result, they were not typically fearful or threatened by the human presence. But the guides were always watching the bears for signs of trouble. During the early summer mating season, Taback-Hlebechuk says some of the males might not appreciate the presence of people. “We watch the body language—they might lower their heads and put their ears back in a subtle warning.”

Even then, however, Taback-Hlebechuk doesn’t immediately accommodate the bear. “We don’t want to take part in any kind of power struggle with a bear, so we take our time leaving the area, and then just find other bears to observe.”

She acknowledges that it is important to be prepared for the occasions in which a bear acts in a way that isn’t safe for observers or filmmakers. Juvenile bears, for example, are often struggling to find their place within the bear society, and as a result will test anyone in the area. “If a bear starts to get a little too close, the guide will stand up behind the group and make sure the bear sees him. If that doesn’t discourage the bear, the guide will take a step forward and perhaps get the rest of the group to stand. If the bear still decides to come closer, the guides turn to their rain gear.”

Rain gear?

“We don’t just carry it for the weather,” says Taback-Hlebechuk. “Snapping a pair of rain pants—like you might snap a towel—makes a very unnatural noise in their environment. Most bears will turn around and walk away. They don’t go out of their way to pick a fight.”

The last resort for the guides, who don’t carry firearms, is a handheld marine flare. “We’d just pop the end of the flare off and hold it in front of us, forming a fire barrier with a bright light and smoke. Bears have an instinctual fear of fire and smoke and will turn and run.”
In the 25 years the guides have been operating in the area, only four flares have been used—all to dissuade juvenile bears who got too excited.

Ultimately, with the guides’ wisdom and the bears’ acceptance of the filmmakers’ presence, the production team was able to capture extraordinary bear behavior. According to Fothergill, that was no accident. “All of our cameramen and [camera]women have spent years in the field, so they know how to behave around animals. We act around animals with a great deal of respect. We keep our distance, though the bears came very close to us on occasion. The result is a highly emotional, intimate and extremely authentic journey of a mother and her cubs.”

**WHO’S WHO IN “BEARS”**

*Family’s Journey Reveals Heroes and Villains*

The story of one family’s epic journey, “Bears” features an array of colorful characters—real-world heroes and villains that come together against a picturesque backdrop, each driven to do whatever it takes to ensure survival—even it comes at the expense of the others.

“After months and months of filming the same animals, it was clear that they all have very distinct personalities,” says co-director Adam Chapman. “And one bear can show a huge range of behaviors, depending on the circumstances. They are completely tuned in to the landscape and the other bears around them. They’re very complex characters.”

**SKY** is a first-time mom, and raising two tiny cubs on her own can be pretty overwhelming. She’s a strong mother with good instincts, but life on the Alaska Peninsula is tough. It’s up to Sky to protect her cubs as they make a momentous trek to find the food they’ll need to make it through next winter.

Mother bears typically give birth to two or three cubs; a bear’s first litter comes at age 8 or 9, and she’ll nurture the cubs for 3 or 4 years.

“She has from the beginning of April to the end of October to fatten up—not just deal with her own hunger for that day or the next, but deal with six months of starvation ahead of her and her family,” says director Alastair Fothergill. “It’s a pretty worrying thing if you’re a mother.”

“It’s kind of a rollercoaster ride,” adds director Keith Scholey. “There are top places to feed, but every bear knows where those are, so there’s not only competition, but potential threats. It becomes a balancing act between keeping the cubs safe and eating enough to get through the year ahead.”
But, adds Fothergill, Sky finds time to enjoy her role as mom. “There are amazing moments of warmth,” he says. “She tussles with her cubs, nudges them, rolls them over—the gentleness of Sky towards her cubs is very special.”

AMBER is a mama’s girl. This young cub likes to catch a ride on Sky’s broad back or curl up next to her for a cozy nap. Amber’s habit of hanging close to mom might make her look timid, but make no mistake: Amber is watching mom’s every move and learning the tricks to surviving in Alaska. Smart bear.

“She pays attention to what Sky’s doing. She listens. And eventually shows an astonishing degree of independence.”

“It’s interesting,” adds Scholey, “that whenever you see two bear cubs with their mother, there is almost always one that stays close to mom, while the other larks around. So ‘Bears’ is a very true reflection of most bear families—and a lot of human families.”

SCOUT is all about adventure. He’s a curious cub who relishes the new sights, sounds and smells his family’s journey reveals each day. But Scout’s penchant for exploration gets him into some trouble. Bold is good if you’re a big bear, but little Scout best keep one eye on mom at all times.

Narrator John C. Reilly says he can relate to the boisterous bear cub. “I was a pretty mischievous kid, so Scout’s personality is probably most like me as a kid.”

“Scout finds his surroundings incredibly exciting,” says Scholey. “He’s experiencing new things every day. The Alaskan wilderness must seem so big and bewildering for a cub just stepping out into the world. His journey is both fun and a little scary.”

Only about a third of bear cubs will make it to adulthood.

MAGNUS is king. He’s the biggest bear in the neighborhood and highly respected. While male bears are typically a threat to young cubs like Amber and Scout—Sky knows that Magnus’ high-ranking status gives him first dibs at every meal, so he’s not likely to bother the young family as long as they keep their distance.

“In bear society, it’s all about dominance,” says Scholey. “And the biggest bears rule. Most other bears will take one look at a bear like Magnus and just let him be.”

Adds Chapman, “When everyone else is running and chasing fish—Magnus just sits and waits for the right moment. Or the opportunity to go and take someone else’s fish.”
CHINOOK, an exile from local bear society, is constantly challenged by the other male bears—especially Magnus. A born fighter, Chinook is indignant, vulnerable, hungry—and a surefire threat to Sky and her young cubs.

“All of the bears in a given area—like where we filmed ‘Bears’—know each other,” says Scholey. “So when a stranger shows up—maybe a male bear they don’t know like Chinook—everyone stands up on their hind legs to check him out. It’s these outcast bears that are the most dangerous. Chinook’s like a guy in a new town who walks into the local pub carrying a big shotgun. He’s a little too ready for a challenge.”

TIKAANI is a mischievous, scheming wolf who spends much of his time lurking in the bears’ shadows. Tikaani fills his belly by stealing fish from unsuspecting bears. But he’s also watching Sky, plotting the best way to outwit the new mother and snatch one of her cubs.

“Tikaani is sly, hanging out on the edges of bear society,” says Chapman. “But he’s an opportunist.”

“Wolves are a competitive predator. A mother bear like Sky with small first-year cubs has to be pretty wary about a wolf like Tikaani.”

THE RAVEN forms an easy alliance with Sky. The shiny black bird beckons Sky from above, pointing her toward the next meal—and Sky rewards the tips with leftover clams, muscles and fish that the raven could never get on her own.

“The best stories are in nature,” says Fothergill. “I love the interaction between Sky and the raven—there’s a charming connection between bird and bear that adds a layer to what’s already an emotional journey.”

GETTING THE GOODS
Production Team Weathers Long Days to Tell Sky’s Story

“It was the cubs that actually chased the wolf off, which was shocking—and not once, but four times. Not many people have witnessed that kind of behavior, much less filmed it.”
~ Gavin Thurston, Principal Photographer, “Bears”

The goal of “Bears” from the beginning was to invite moviegoers into the world of the bears—to put them nose-to-nose with the enormous and intimidating animals to reveal their softer side. “What makes this film so special is the incredible intimacy,” says director Keith Scholey. “I think viewers won’t even think about a camera or the fact that we were there alongside these enormous animals, because they’ll be absorbed in the film.”
SEEING IS BELIEVING
One of the first steps to achieving that intimacy forced the team of cinematographers to lie down on the job—literally. “We made a rule very early on that everything should be shot from as low as possible,” says Scholey, “so we’d always be within the eye-line of the animal or below. It’s not something people will notice necessarily, but it will give them the feeling of being in the bears’ world.”

The on-site production, which took place in the Alaska Peninsula between April and October over the course of two years, employed a team of talented photographers and filed assistants who spent weeks at a time on location. They used two main cameras—the Sony F65, for its high-resolution and incredible picture quality, and Sony SRW-9000, which is more portable and offers a longer reach with telephoto lenses. The latter allowed the cameramen and camerawomen to capture unexpected bear action from afar.

The team also did underwater photography on a Sony F55, in addition to time-lapse shooting and aerial photography. But the best resource, of course, was the team itself. “The key to our approach with Disneynature films is spending a long time in the field with the very best cameramen and camerawomen,” says director Alastair Fothergill. “We’re very fortunate that these movies attract the top talent in our business.”

But even with the luxury of a longer timeline, the key to success is being in the right place at the right time. “As filmmakers,” says Scholey, “we need to be among the bears day in and day out, from dawn till dusk, as much as the weather—and the bears—will allow.”

The unpredictable weather certainly proved challenging. Says principal photographer Sophie Darlington, “Some days the wind was blowing, it was freezing, the rain was coming into our hoods and we couldn’t keep the camera dry, while the bears were all huddled up not doing much of anything. We’d think, ‘What are we doing out here?’”

“You have absolutely no control of it,” adds principal photographer Mark Yates. “We endured days and days of rain—which can get quite frustrating, especially when there’s been a lot of great bear activity. But once the sun came out, it was worth waiting for.”

BEARS EVERYWHERE
“There were days when we’d see around 20 to 30 bears in a two-mile stretch of the meadows,” says field assistant Olly Scholey. “When there was a lot going on, a lot of interaction, we just wanted to be there.”

“When the bears were active, it was perhaps the most entertaining sight I’ve ever seen,” says Darlington, who also worked on Disneynature’s “African Cats.” “The bears would be madly busy. Some would do belly flops to catch a fish. One bear’s attempts to make friends were divine. The relationships between them were so complex. It was brilliant—it was like watching a soap.”
The mystery surrounding a film of this nature is just how a cameraman or camerawoman is able to get close enough to the film’s subjects to capture those unique moments critical for big-screen success. The consensus among camera assistants, photographers, directors and naturalist guides is that it all starts with respect. “We were in their world,” says field producer Mandi Stark. “We always let the bear dictate what was going to happen. If they weren’t happy with the situation, they’d let us know. If they weren’t comfortable, they’d usually disappear—which, of course, is not what we wanted.”

According to co-director Adam Chapman, who’s worked with bears throughout his career, it didn’t take long for the production team members to fall into a rhythm with the bears, particularly Sky and her cubs. “We knew where she would sleep, we knew when she would come out. We could be waiting for her. We’d be there when she emerged and she could make up her own mind where she’d go, and often she’d come very close to us. We put in the time so she’d be comfortable with us.”

Adds Yates, “The best thing for us would be to position ourselves and let the animals move as close to us as they wanted. Our mother bear actually brought her cubs pretty close to us and let them suckle, which was quite special.”

The same logic applied when the photographer was in the air—filmmakers spent days helping the bears acclimate to the helicopter before shooting the key footage of the opening trek down the mountain. With accomplished aerial photographer Jamie McPherson behind the camera—a Cineflex with a multi-axis gimble and software to hold the picture stable in flight—filmmakers were very strategic in their approach so that Mom would be comfortable interacting with her cubs. “We used the same approach as we would on the ground,” says McPherson. “We approach from downwind, stay low and move slowly to keep the noise down as much as possible. We always tried to approach in her line of sight so that we didn’t take her by surprise.”

The helicopter used an extremely long telephoto lens, which allowed filmmakers to stay a good distance away from the bears and not disturb them. “We started with short filming sessions,” says McPherson, “only filming for a few minutes, then giving her a break, but keeping the helicopter in the air so she knew we were there. We built up the time over a few days and she relaxed and allowed us to get some very intimate moments with her cubs.”

Cameraman Didier Noirot and field producer Jonathan Smith ventured underwater alongside brown bears to capture their remarkable fishing abilities from an unexpected perspective. They went to great lengths to ensure safety and obscurity. Says Smith, “If we were going to get the bears swimming, we had to completely camouflage ourselves—we had to become invisible to the bears. Otherwise, they might get spooked and take off, get curious and investigate, or potentially defend themselves from a perceived threat. None would be conducive to getting our shots.”
They employed rebreather apparatus underwater to eliminate the presence of telltale bubbles and entered the water from an area of the lake that dropped off quickly—feeling they could dive deeper than the bears if the situation required it. They wore thick 9mm wetsuits to protect them from the water—which was just above freezing at the time of their shoot. Thanks to the quantity of salmon—some decaying in the water—visibility proved challenging and a safety concern as it was difficult to determine how close the bears actually were. Co-director Adam Chapman helped guide them into position using radio communication. Despite the challenges, they were able to get their shot.

It was the kind of shot that once seemed unimaginable. Principal photographer Gavin Thurston—who’s been around wild animals his entire career—recalls his first experience with a brown bear. “Despite being with a guide, I was very nervous after hearing all of the stories about bears’ violent behavior. But I didn’t have to watch them for long before realizing that those stories were complete nonsense. The bears of Katmai are incredibly gentle creatures and very smart, too. They don’t want any trouble.

“The longer we spent watching and observing,” continues Thurston, “the more likely we’d get those intricate bits of behavior that make a really interesting film.”

BABY STEPS
The photographers, who spent 14 hours among the bears on most days, say that only a fraction of the behavior they observed was even shot for consideration for the final cut. “Some days we’d get 3 or 4 minutes,” says Darlington. “On a good day, we might get 6 minutes. On a great day, we’d get 45 minutes if we roamed in different areas. When the salmon arrived, the bears went ballistic and we’d grab every moment we could get.”

According to Thurston, the photographers have developed a special sense throughout their careers that tells them when to shoot and when to wait. “I’m not a scientist and I wasn’t experienced with bears prior to this film,” he says, “but after years of filming wildlife, I learned that certain body posturing leads to certain behavior. We could often anticipate what they’d do next.”

PLAYING IT SAFE
Thurston says he depended heavily on the naturalist guides—both for insight to bear behavior and to ensure his safety. “I’d have one eye to the camera and the other one closed most of the time—so I was happy to have someone watch my back.”

Adds Darlington, “At one point, I was looking through the lens and out of nowhere a bear hurtled right by me—just a few feet away. I looked up and said, ‘OK, that was quite close.’ Olly [Scholey], the camera assistant, said, ‘I thought it was coming for you, but the guide said to stay still, so we all did.’”

Darlington says that the guides’ keen observation skills and amazing instincts were the key to their safety. “It might feel dangerous from time to time, but we trusted their judgment. If you’re a salmon, it’s really dangerous in Katmai. If you’re a human with a guide who knows what to look for, you’re pretty safe.”
Darlington and Thurston were both able to capture wolf behavior that has rarely—if ever—been caught on film. Darlington watched a wolf patiently wait his turn among a host of brown bears to fish for salmon. “This was proper fishing,” she says. “This wolf—a big wolf with paw prints as big as my hand—would come up with a wagging fish that was so big, he couldn’t keep his head still.”

Thurston, meanwhile, was on location one evening with Sky and the cubs. “Suddenly, this wolf appeared,” he says. “I really feared for those cubs. Mum trotted up and gave them some support, but it was the cubs that actually chased the wolf off, which was shocking—and not once, but four times. Not many people have witnessed that kind of behavior, much less filmed it.”

AWESOME
It’s those experiences that fuel the filmmakers’ passion for their work. Despite long days, difficult treks with heavy gear and weeks away from their families, the filmmakers insist it’s the only job for them. Says Darlington, “It might not be everyone’s cup of tea, because it’s very hard work and you spend a lot of time away from home, but I love my job. I think we all feel that way. It is such a privilege to get to go to a place like Alaska. It’s awesome, and I don’t use that word freely: it’s not just the bears—it’s the flowers, the mountains, the bugs. It’s everything. It’s a completely magical place.”

Thurston says he hopes to share the experience—and found cool ways to help do it. “We want to give the audience a sense of an amazing place like Alaska. It’s quite nice to bring in some of the Hollywood-style toys—cranes and track—to be able to take the audience on that journey with the mum and cubs. It’s not without hardship—a lot of the equipment is quite heavy, so we do a lot of wheezing and panting up and down hills and across the beaches—but in the end it’s worth it, and hopefully the audience will get that sense that they’ve been somewhere special.”

“One of the wonderful things about working on Disneynature movies and spending so much time with these animals is you get unbelievably emotionally involved,” adds Fothergill. “If we can get just some of that emotion onto the screen, we know we’re going to make an engaging movie. What we’re trying to do with ‘Bears’ is to take people to one of the most beautiful places on our planet and engage them in a really intimate story about one of the most iconic animals—the grizzly bear.”

MUSIC IS IN THE AIR
Filmmakers Call on Composer George Fenton to Create a Score with Personality
Olivia Holt Performs End Credit Song, “Carry On”

No one said this would ever be easy my love
But I will be by your side when the impossible rises up
We will travel this life well worn no matter the cost no matter how long
We will leave our footprints behind and carry on.
“Carry On”—End Credit Song, “Bears”

“Bears”—with its wild setting and vibrant cast of characters—called for a musical backdrop that would aptly reflect the film’s emotional journey. “The music is really important to this story,” says director Keith Scholey. “Music provides much of the emotional voice of the characters. It gives the film pace and an energy with a North American theme.”

HIGH SCORE
George Fenton, the composer behind big-screen scores “Gandhi” and “You’ve Got Mail,” as well as Disneynature’s first True Life Adventure “Earth,” was called on to create the score for “Bears.” “I think George is a very cinematic composer,” says director Alastair Fothergill. “He’s very good at creating a sense of place, a sense of majesty. He’s also extremely talented when it comes to the special moments of a film—the intimacy of a cuddle between mom and Amber, or the humor of the scene where Scout gets his claw caught in a clam.”

Says Fenton, “I’ve worked with Alastair many times, so we have a rapport, which is important. His main note was that the score should express the personality of the bears and also reflect the amazing American landscapes where they live.”

According to the composer, the score has a “New Americana” feel, with acoustic guitars, dobro and fiddle, featuring a mixed tradition of folk with some country elements. “There is [also] a call for a large orchestra,” says Fenton, “also playing in the traditions of American music, and often including solo elements that make the score special to this film.”

Fenton wanted to infuse the score with elements that would reflect the nature of the brown bear itself—from their remarkable survival skills to their roles as parents, as well as the sense of humor in their behavior. “The score features a voice that represents the soul of the mother and a redwood flute played in the style of American Indian music,” says Fenton, who created special themes for each of the principal characters. “It’s important that the film plays as a story with an emotional arc. Therefore, investing in the characters in that way makes the film hopefully more emotionally accessible.

Parts of the score were recorded with a 90-piece orchestra, while other sequences featured a smaller sound with solo elements and the guitar and fiddle. “I used electronics within the orchestra, too, for moments like the avalanche and the tidal sequence,” says Fenton, who says his favorite sequence, perhaps, is the opening trek with Sky and the cubs. “I love the voice of Haley Glennie-Smith and then the development of the big landscape and the playfulness of Sky and the cubs—so happy to be out of the den. It was a lovely run of scenes to score.”

Walt Disney Records will release a digital score album on April 29, 2014, available at iTunes, Amazon and other digital retailers.
SING-SONG
Early in the film the score is complemented by “Home,” a song by “American Idol” season 11 winner Phillip Phillips. The song, written by Drew Pearson and Greg Holden, was first performed by Phillips as his “Idol” coronation song, and was wildly successful as a single following his win.

Filmmakers turned to Disney XD/Disney Channel star Olivia Holt (“Kickin’ It,” “I Didn’t Do It”) for the film’s end credit song, “Carry On.” “It’s an incredibly heartwarming, inspiring and encouraging song about a family of bears and their epic journey,” says Holt. “‘Bears’ takes you on this amazing journey into the world of bears. It shows the love, struggle and strength it takes to raise a family. I am so excited to take part in something so wonderful.”

Written by Melissa Peirce and Ben West, and produced by Grammy-winning producer John Shanks, the ballad debuted on Radio Disney on March 28, 2014; the music video, which features footage from the film, premiered on Disney Channel on March 29 and was subsequently featured on VEVO and Disney.com.

ROARS AND SNORES
Of course, it’s not only music that helps bring a film like “Bears” to life. Sound editors Kate Hopkins and Tim Owens, who worked on Disneynature’s “African Cats” and “Chimpanzee,” infused the film with the best of nature—from footsteps and splashes to bear roars and snores. Owens actually accompanied Scholey on a sound-gathering expedition. “I thought the best thing to do was to leave a microphone out in the woods,” he says. “That was very fruitful.” They placed a microphone capable of recording 12 hours of activity in a location where they’d previously seen a bear napping. “I thought she might come back, and she did, and was very curious about what we were up to. We heard a lot of huffing and puffing.”

In addition to bear sounds, Owens’ microphones picked up assorted insect sounds and a lucky visit from a raven. “It flew right next to it and it was a virtuous thing,” says Owens. “it went through every sound in its repertoire. I didn’t realize it had such a complicated range.”

The team had to improvise for unusual sounds—like a bear moving in slow motion, something nature couldn’t provide. A blend of other animals, Foley artist recordings and technical magic was used to create the right sounds. Hopkins says it’s the little sounds that make a difference in a big-screen adventure like “Bears.” “We have to get their breaths, grunts and sniffs just right to make a close-up work,” she says. “They’re very snuffy and breathy—they don’t try to be quiet.”

THE VOICE
Narrator John C. Reilly helped bring out the humor and drive the emotion in the film. “The right narrator is so important to a Disneynature film,” said Fothergill. “Alaska is a vast and powerful place, and John C. Reilly has a big, broad voice that will aptly
showcase the scope of ‘Bears.’ And his ability to deliver the humor in this film will completely elevate it.”

Added director Keith Scholey, “John C. Reilly is the voice of ‘Wreck-It Ralph’ himself—he’s sort of a bear of a man with both strength and mischief, and his voice reflects that. He’s very funny and has the ability to be empathetic, too, so he’s a perfect fit for this story.”

Said Reilly, “I’m thrilled to be part of Disneynature’s ‘Bears’—not only because I find bears fascinating, but also because of Disney’s commitment to preserving national parks through their donations to these national treasures. Our national parks are the home of many bears and need ongoing care. I am also humbled and honored to walk in the footsteps of the previous narrators of these important films.”

**TAPPING DR. JANE GOODALL, DISNEYNATURE SHARES FOR “BEARS”**

Conservation Program SEE “BEARS,” PROTECT OUR NATIONAL PARKS Helps Wildlife and Wild Places Nationwide

Continuing the Disneynature conservation tradition, SEE “BEARS,” PROTECT OUR NATIONAL PARKS invites moviegoers to see the film during opening week (April 18-24, 2014) and Disneynature, through the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund, will make a contribution to the National Park Foundation, the official charity of America’s national parks, to protect wildlife and wild places across America’s national park system.

Dr. Jane Goodall was tapped to help share Disneynature’s conservation message, and as part of her role, was welcomed to the Katmai location where much of “Bears” was filmed. She says conservation is key if we hope to preserve places like Katmai National Park. “There are still wonderful places like this, and we have to make sure that continues,” she says. ‘I believe this Disneynature film will help that happen.”

“We can’t wait to share these bears’ fascinating behaviors and innate curiosity as they navigate a beautiful but challenging world,” says Alan Bergman, president of The Walt Disney Studios. “We are committed to protecting the environment and inspiring Disneynature fans to take part in conservation by joining forces with organizations like the National Park Foundation to preserve the natural world.”

“America’s national parks are home to a vast and stunning array of wildlife, including approximately 400 endangered species,” adds Neil Mulholland, president and CEO of the National Park Foundation. "We are proud to team with Disney, a dedicated supporter of our national parks, to invite moviegoers everywhere to join us as we work to ensure that our nation’s most treasured places, and all that they protect, thrive for generations to come.”

The SEE “BEARS,” PROTECT OUR NATIONAL PARKS program will generate Disneynature Impact Grants to help individual parks in the areas of wildlife protection,
habitat restoration and conservation research. Disneynature has committed to support national parks programs as Disneynature fans nationwide hit theaters to see “Bears” during opening week. All initiatives celebrate the mission of the National Park Service, which turns 98 this year.

Examples of Disneynature Impact Grants include:

**HABITAT RESTORATION**
*Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tennessee*
Wetland habitats are uncommon in Great Smoky Mountains National Park and provide critical habitat for diverse native plants and animals, some found nowhere else in the park. Bears, bobcats, foxes, birds, amphibians and fish, as well as diverse native vegetation call wetlands home, but these habitats are severely impacted by invasive plant species. This project will allow for restoration of this vital habitat through invasive plant removal, seed collection, propagation and planting of native species, as well as educational outreach.

**WILDLIFE PROTECTION & CONSERVATION RESEARCH**
*Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah*
The American black bear is a charismatic species whose range is often vast. This project will advance research into black bear characteristics, examining black bear movement and habitat use in and surrounding Bryce Canyon National Park through radio collaring. The park will also develop educational outreach programs for real-time interpretation of black bear movement and conservation challenges, as well as curricula for schools.

**WILDLIFE PROTECTION & CONSERVATION RESEARCH**
*Yosemite National Park, California*
The Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog was once the most abundant vertebrate in the mountains of California, but steep population declines during the past century have pushed this species to the brink of extinction. To improve the effectiveness of conservation efforts to protect these frogs, including habitat restoration and frog reintroductions, Yosemite National Park will implement a frog tagging and radio-tracking study, is designed to identify critical habitats and migration corridors used by these frogs.

Additionally:
- The Disney Store will contribute $1 to the National Park Foundation for every “Bears” plush purchased between March 10 and May 11, 2014: [www.disneystore.com](http://www.disneystore.com). Disney Store will also award a reusable “Bears” shopping bag on April 22 to guests who bring five plastic bags in to be recycled.
- DODOcase introduces a limited-edition collection of iPad Air, iPad Mini and iPhone 5/5S cases featuring a custom “Bears” design: 20 percent of each sale will go directly to the National Park Foundation: [www.DODOcase.com](http://www.DODOcase.com).
• New York jewelry designer Alex Woo designed eco-friendly pendants inspired by the film, are available in Sterling Silver & 14kt Gold—20 percent of each sale will benefit the National Park Foundation: www.alexwoo.com.
• Unlock the exclusive Bear costume and Club Penguin will donate $1, up to $50,000 to the National Park Foundation: www.ClubPenguin.com.
• At Disney Parks, Duffy the Disney Bear dons a ranger costume; $1 from the sale of each Ranger Duffy April 1-30 will be donated to the National Park Foundation.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

ALASTAIR FOTHERGILL (Director) was described by The Wall Street Journal as “the Spielberg of nature films.” He is the director of three previous Disneynature productions, “Earth,” “African Cats” (with Keith Scholey) and “Chimpanzee” (with Mark Linfield), all of which are among the five highest-grossing feature-length nature films in North American box-office history.

Fothergill’s other theatrical credits as a director include “Deep Blue.” From 2002 to 2006, Fothergill was series producer of “Planet Earth,” one of the most critically acclaimed documentary series of all time. Most recently, he executive produced the BBC/Discovery Channel series “Frozen Planet,” a natural history of the polar regions.

At the same time as directing “Bears,” Fothergill is also executive producer of a new landmark series for the BBC, “The Hunt,” examining the strategies used by predators and prey, to be broadcast worldwide in 2015. His many other credits include “Life In the Freezer” and “The Trials of Life.”

Fothergill studied zoology at Durham University and began his career in 1983 when he joined the BBC’s renowned Natural History Unit. He served as head of the Natural History Unit from 1992 until 1998.

When he is not working, Fothergill is a keen walker and amateur artist.

KEITH SCHOLEY (Director/Producer) began working for Disneynature on the feature film “African Cats,” which he directed alongside Alastair Fothergill. He directed Disneynature’s new big-screen adventure “Bears,” also alongside Fothergill. Scholey is also the executive producer of the Discovery Channel series “North America,” as well as a series uncovering animal mysteries on remote islands for Animal Planet & Discovery Networks International.

Born and raised in East Africa, Scholey qualified as a zoologist with both a degree and PhD from Bristol University. In 1982, he began work as a wildlife stills photographer, a passion he pursued throughout his television career. Scholey began working with the BBC Natural History Unit as a researcher and subsequently became a producer,
making numerous films for the “Natural World” and “Wildlife on One” series, as well as for special series including David Attenborough’s award-winning “The Private Life of Plants.” In 1993, he became an executive producer, running “Wildlife on One” and creating popular series such as the “Wildlife Specials” and “Big Cat Diary.”

In 1998, Scholey was appointed the head of the BBC’s Natural History Unit, and as editor-in-chief, oversaw series including David Attenborough’s “The Life of Birds” and “The Life of Mammals,” “Blue Planet,” “Andes to Amazon,” “Cousins” and “Wild Africa.” In 2002 he was appointed controller of Specialist Factual at the BBC, responsible for in-house natural history, science, history, arts, business and religious productions. Natural history productions made during this time included “Springwatch,” David Attenborough’s “Life in the Undergrowth” and “Planet Earth.” In 2006 he was appointed controller of Factual Production, responsible for all of the BBC’s in-house factual television production in England and also the deputy chief creative officer for Vision Productions.

The productions for which Scholey has been responsible have won numerous awards, including Emmys®, BAFTAs, Wildscreen Pandas and Jackson Hole Awards.

Outside his work, Scholey, who lives in Bristol, enjoys sailing, scuba diving and fine French wine.

ADAM CHAPMAN (Co-Director & Producer) began his career in wildlife filmmaking in 1998 working for the BBC’s Natural History Unit. His credits with the BBC include “Wild Africa,” “Big Cat Diary,” “Orangutan Diaries,” “Bill Oddie Goes Wild” and “Springwatch.”

Chapman’s work on “Big Bear Week” took him to Katmai National Park to film brown bears, where he developed the extensive knowledge and passion for the animals that later proved invaluable for making Disneynature’s new big-screen adventure “Bears.” He was also a producer of two episodes of the BBC & Discovery Channel’s highly successful series “Life.”

In 2009, Chapman left the BBC to team up with Keith Scholey as a producer on two episodes of the Discovery Channel's landmark series “North America,” and is continuing his television work as a producer on a new series for Animal Planet & Discovery Networks International, uncovering animal mysteries on remote islands. When he is not working, Chapman enjoys riding both motorbikes and horses.

Acclaimed actor JOHN C. REILLY (Narrator) has made an impact with both comedic and dramatic roles in film and theater.

“Magnolia” and “Boogie Nights.” His theater appearances include “True West” and “A Streetcar Named Desire” on Broadway.

He is a native of Chicago and a graduate of the Theater School at DePaul University.

**GEORGE FENTON (Composer)** continues his successful relationship with Alastair Fothergill.

Following the release of “The Blue Planet,” the first part of the “Planet” trilogy for which Fenton won Ivor Novello, BAFTA, and Emmy® awards for Best Television Score, he created the show “Blue Planet Live,” which has toured both in the U.K. and worldwide, performed by many of the world’s leading orchestras. For the music of “Planet Earth,” he won an Emmy® and a Classical Brit Award. Fenton’s other nature film credits include “Frozen Planet.” and “One Life”. He also did the score the Disneynature’s first feature film, “Earth.”

Fenton has composed for a wide variety of feature films, receiving Academy Award® nominations for “The Fisher King,” “Dangerous Liaisons” and “Gandhi.” He was also nominated for “Cry Freedom” in the categories of original score and original song. Other scores include “The Madness of King George,” “Groundhog Day,” “Shadowlands,” “Ever After,” “Anna and the King,” “Stage Beauty,” “Mrs. Henderson Presents,” “Hitch,” “Fool’s Gold” and “The Bounty Hunter.” He’s also composed for 17 of Ken Loach’s films, including “Land and Freedom,” “My Name is Joe,” “The Wind that Shakes the Barley,” “Looking for Eric”; he is currently finishing the new Loach film “Jimmy’s Hall.”

Other recent projects include Terry Gilliam’s “The Zero Theorem” and “The Mozart Project”—a new concept in iBooks produced by Pipedreams Media of which he is a partner.

**OLIVIA HOLT (End-Credit Song By)** performs “Carry On,” the end credit song for Disneynature’s big-screen adventure “Bears.”

Holt stars as Lindy, a high-spirited and ambitious teenager who excels in school, but always manages to be in the center of some chaotic event along with her fraternal twin brother Logan and their three best friends, in Disney Channel's comedy series, “I Didn't Do It.”

Holt is best known for her co-starring role as Kim in Disney XD’s hit series, “Kickin' It.” Her portrayal of the confident martial artist and only girl in the dojo who could go toe-to-toe with the boys, along with her starring role as the fearless monster hunter Skylar Lewis in the Disney Channel Original Movie, “Girl vs. Monster,” has made the young performer a fan favorite with girls and boys worldwide.

An accomplished singer as well, Holt performed three of the top singles on the “Girl vs. Monster” soundtrack – “Nothing’s Going to Stop Me,” “Fearless” and the iTunes smash
hit, “Had Me at Hello,” for which she won a Radio Disney Music Award. She also covered the classic holiday song “Winter Wonderland” for the Disney Channel Holiday Playlist release, and her rendition of “These Boots Are Made for Walkin’” is featured on the Shake It Up I <3 Dance Soundtrack. Additionally, Holt performed “Snowflakes” for Walt Disney Record's latest holiday CD, “Holiday Unwrapped.”

Born August, 5, 1997, in Germantown, Tenn., and raised in Nesbit, Miss., Holt began singing and acting on stage when she was 3. She starred in numerous community productions, including “Annie” and “Through the Looking Glass,” before landing a role in the indie film “Black & Blue.” Her television credits also include several national commercials for leading brands, such as Hasbro, Mattel and Bratz dolls.

Holt was class president in seventh grade and was a member of the chess team, school choir and cheerleading squad. She competed in gymnastics for more than six years before deciding to focus on acting and singing.

In her spare time, Holt enjoys spending time with her family and friends, going to the movies and theme parks, playing the guitar and piano, and practicing gymnastics and Parkour (a style of free running and jumping). Holt also donates her time and talent serving as an ambassador for St. Jude Children’s Hospital and recently designed the “Heart of St. Jude” T-shirt for the organization’s 10th annual St. Jude Thanks and Giving® campaign.

One of three children, Holt currently resides in Los Angeles with her family and their beloved Yorkshire terriers Diesel and Scout. (Coincidentally, one of the bear cubs in “Bears” is named Scout.)

DR. JANE GOODALL (Ph.D., DBE, Founder of the Jane Goodall Institute & UN Messenger of Peace, Disneynature Ambassador) began her landmark study of chimpanzee behavior in July 1960, in what is now Tanzania. Her work at Gombe Stream would become the foundation of future primatological research and redefine the relationship between humans and animals.

In 1977, Dr. Goodall established the Jane Goodall Institute, which continues the Gombe research and is a global leader in the effort to protect chimpanzees and their habitats. The Institute is widely recognized for innovative, community-centered conservation and development programs in Africa, and for Jane Goodall’s Roots & Shoots, the global environmental and humanitarian youth program.

Dr. Goodall founded Roots & Shoots with a group of Tanzanian students in 1991. Today, Roots & Shoots connects hundreds of thousands of youth in more than 130 countries who take action to make the world a better place for people, animals and the environment.
Dr. Goodall travels an average of 300 days per year, speaking about the threats facing chimpanzees, other environmental crises and her reasons for hope that humankind will solve the problems it has imposed on the earth.

Dr. Goodall's honors include the French Legion of Honor, the Medal of Tanzania and Japan's prestigious Kyoto Prize. In 2002, Dr. Goodall was appointed to serve as a United Nations Messenger of Peace and in 2003, she was named a Dame of the British Empire.