

Wild Kingdom

Should documentary shooters capture 60 fps for their natural-history projects?

We examine the pros and cons. ■ By C.R. Caillouet



Photo credit?

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In the last issue, I tried to address the difficulty of extracting 24 from 60 fps material. The reason why some folks would like to have that option is that they're shooting at 60 fps for natural-history programming. Many documentary and/or natural-history shooters have felt that the feeling of "reality" conveyed by capturing and displaying 60 images per second, either progressive or interlaced, is an important aspect of programming that's intended to make the viewers feel as if they're in the scene. The reality suggestion of higher frame rates is still a valid concept. It's just as valid as the idea that 24 fps works better for drama for exactly the opposite reason: It leads viewers to believe that they're being told a story that puts them in a mental state to fill in the blanks with their imagination. As a program creator, you can subscribe to either approach if that method helps you to

convey your message, and of course, to sell your product.

I come from the 60-images-per-second world, and until a few years ago, I thought that 60p was the holy grail for documentary production. But in the middle of an HD workflow workshop for a major natural-history producer, I realized that there are global issues that I, as a sheltered American producer, hadn't considered.

The primary issue is created by the need to consider international coproduction. If you sell your program to a major program distributor, the chances are pretty good that they'll want to dis-

tribute it globally to maximize the return on the investment (ROI).

The problem comes when they have to deliver a 60p or 60i program to a 50 fps world. As I have discussed in previous columns, conversion can be messy, and all converters are not created equal. There are two broad approaches to converting between frame rates. The expensive one involves motion analysis, motion prediction and the creation of new frames at a new frame rate with continuous motion—maybe not perfectly accurate motion, but continuous, nevertheless. The second, less expen-

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