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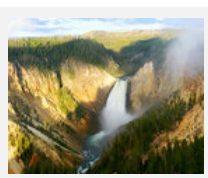
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TV Review: Yellowstone, BBC Two, Sunday 29 March, 9pm



I should warn you from the off that this isn't just a review of tonight's episode, but of the whole series. And it isn't even so much a review as a love letter, or eulogy... because while Nature's Great Events has been getting all the flora and fauna-based credit recently, this majestic yet understated and consistently surprising series has quietly been turning out to be one of the best nature documentaries I've seen in a long time. And all this without even the teensiest involvement from Mr Attenborough. Impressive

stuff.

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The reason I say surprising specifically is because it is this element which makes the documentary so very enjoyable. If you like your nature shows then it's easy to get shark-and-monkey fatigue, and while I love sharks and monkeys as much as the next guy, their ubiquity can leave me wanting to see something genuinely new. And this is precisely what Yellowstone has provided.

Take the first episode. Looking at Yellowstone's ridiculously cold winters, the episode concentrated, just for a few minutes, on the snow fox. It looks cute, if somewhat unremarkable, but it is its behaviour that's astonishing: it listens through the six feet of snow which lay on the ground throughout winter for the scuttling of little mice, and when it hears movement, it leaps into the air, and dives headfirst into the snow. Like Tom Daley!

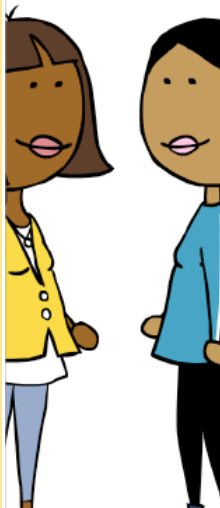
It was one of those TV moments which quite literally leaves you open-mouthed, and what made it particularly endearing was that it wasn't oversold by the narration. They just showed this amazing behaviour, and then moved on, as if to say "You like that? Well we've got a wolf picking frozen fish that others tried to



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say "You like that? Well we've got a wolf picking frozen fish that others tried to hide under the ice up next, so moving along. Look out for the diamond dust." Yes, this place has diamond dust (when it's so cold that moisture in the air freezes). That's how good it is.

The second episode turned to summer, and the snow-covered landscape transformed into mile upon mile of flower meadow. It was so beautiful it looked almost fake, Oz-like. This season's astounding sight was that of a family of bears scabbling through loose rock on a precarious mountainside to look for moths. Bears eat moths. Who knew? There were also blizzards in June, bluebirds, hummingbirds, and raging forest fires - all this slap bang in the middle of America. You know, the home of skyscrapers and McDonalds and cheese in a tube. It's easy to forget that as you watch.

And tonight we came to autumn, and the classic line "the bull elk urinates on itself to enhance its masculine appeal." The scenery may not quite have the same breathtaking quality as summer and winter - and more of this episode was taken up explaining how the park is being affected by human activity - but there were still scenes to treasure. In particular the charmingly named Clark's Nutcracker bird burying its nuts and seeds in groups of ten. Not nine, not eleven; always ten.

It is important to say that the way this documentary is put together is as satisfying as the nature it showcases. There is a quietness, a real sense of space about this show - which of course matches the immensity of the 3472 square miles which the park covers - and the narration from Spooks' Peter Firth is generally straight-forward, at times really rather poetic. Yes, some nature programmes insist on telling us over and over how AMAZING nature can be. Yellowstone was happy just showing us.

Posted by Anna Lowman on March 29, 2009 in [Documentary](#), [TV Reviews](#) | [Permalink](#)

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