



## Finding hidden worlds: ALEXA 35 on a wildlife shoot in Patagonia

A team of documentary filmmakers used ALEXA 35 and Signature Zooms to unveil the natural wonders of Chilean Patagonia, capturing breathtaking wildlife images with stunning detail.

Oct. 14, 2024

Located at the southern tip of South America, Patagonia boasts some of the most stunning scenery found anywhere on Earth—from massive granite spires and ancient glaciers to cobalt blue lakes and dramatic peaks. The Patagonian steppe, a vast expanse of grassland, dominates the interior regions including the remote wilderness of Torres del Paine National Park in Chilean Patagonia, home to the world's densest population of puma.



The documentary film crew chose ALEXA 35 and Signature Zooms to capture hidden wildlife in Patagonia

When renowned Chilean wildlife filmmaker René Araneda chose to capture footage of these pumas in Patagonia's wilds, he knew the challenges would be great. "Our goal was to showcase the splendor of these magnificent cats by using the absolute latest in digital film technology. We wanted to capture the best images, on location, in a very harsh environment," Araneda explains. Opting for ALEXA 35 in combination with Signature Zoom lenses turned out to be the right decision: The latest ARRI digital camera system would end up facilitating unprecedented images with rich colors and stunning details.

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### René Araneda

Wildlife filmmaker

Araneda teamed up with acclaimed Argentinian production company Griyo TV, represented by William Hicklin, and wildlife cinematographer Cristobal Santamaria. Together they set out to push creative and technical boundaries, bringing audiences closer to nature, capturing rare species such as Patagonia's pumas as well as the remarkable Andean condor.



Capturing the Patagonian puma required pushing the ALEXA 35 to its limits

While plentiful in number, the puma's elusive nature and twilight behavior make capturing their activities uniquely challenging. The crew knew that capturing impactful footage would require pushing the camera and its features to their limits. They would have to be ready, in the perfect position, with the best technology, the instant an opportunity arose.

Using ARRI's ALEXA 35 camera system, the team relied on intuitive physical controls, allowing them to adjust settings extremely fast when filming spontaneous animal activity. Plus, the filmmakers were able to make use of the camera's cutting-edge processing, optimized for 4K high frame rate filming. Thermal management ensured outstanding image stability despite rapid temperature swings during the shoot. Filmmaker Araneda calls the ALEXA 35 a "four-wheel drive animal" regarding its ability to withstand Patagonia's extremes, while still delivering unmatched image quality.



DP Santamaria: "You get that superb cinematic experience documenting the natural world"

Most importantly, the ALEXA 35 delivered breathtaking wildlife imagery that blew the minds of the seasoned documentary film crew behind this project. "You get all the tones—the grays, the browns, the different scales between...details you don't normally see. And no matter what, we could not clip the camera in the extreme highlights," says cinematographer Cris Santamaria. The ALEXA 35's cutting-edge sensor and color science revealed a hidden realm of hues and details, allowing the team to vividly capture the pumas in their full true glory.

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### Cristobal Santamaria

Cinematographer

Immense 17+ stops of dynamic range in the ALEXA 35 also enabled extremes of brightness and darkness in the same frame. Challenging, high-contrast scenes with sunny skies and deep forest shadows previously required making a choice on what to expose. But the ALEXA 35 displayed full detail across all areas and conditions. The cats could be filmed fully visible when hunting in sunlight, shade, or at dawn and dusk. Utilizing the ALEXA 35's [Enhanced Sensitivity](#) mode, their behaviors remained discernible and clean, deep into the fading twilight.



The ALEXA 35 allowed the crew to vividly capture the pumas in their full glory

To convey their intimate experiences within the powerful landscape, the filmmakers chose ARRI's Signature Zoom 65-300 mm T2.8 lens. Its state-of-the-art optics allowed the crew to capture razor sharp, edge-to-edge, and consistent images throughout the entire focal range. The team also utilized ARRI's 1.7x extender. With a loss of only 1.6 T-stops, the extender took the focal length to 510 mm. The framing flexibility proved particularly valuable when capturing Patagonia's majestic condors at 120 frames per second.

Soaring with over 10-foot wings, the condors' huge size and sharp eyesight lend them an aura of dominance over the land. Yet filming these animals posed a great challenge, as they often appear as a uniform black silhouette against blue skies. By harnessing the power of the [ALEXA 35](#) and [Signature Zooms](#), DP Santamaria realised a world of color and detail never captured. "I saw colors in the condor that I didn't know even existed, but the camera saw them." Even at a distance, intricate details of weathered flight feathers came through beautifully, unlocking new creative possibilities for portraying the bird's grace and power.



The documentary crew filmed the majestic Patagonian condor at 120 frames per second

The ALEXA 35's high speed abilities enabled new perspectives by slowing down the condor's fluid flight. As Will Hicklin explains, "Filming at 120 frames per second, we could see intricacies, like feathers being ruffled by the wind." For cinematographer Santamaria, the combination of camera and zoom lens offered exactly the right technology to realize his creative vision: "You get that superb cinematic experience documenting the natural world," the DP says. Filmmaker Araneda seconds: "The ALEXA 35 enabled us to capture unique behaviors of pumas in stunning cinematic detail." By the project's conclusion, the team had fully harnessed the ALEXA 35's capabilities to share the natural beauty of Patagonia.



The ALEXA 35's high speed abilities enabled new perspectives by slowing down the condor's fluid flight

**Slide through images from the ALEXA 35 wildlife shoot**



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