



High definition exhibition brings tigers to viewers in amazing detail

by Wendy Ellis

How close is too close to a tiger?

Wildlife filmmaker and photographer Carol Amore will tell you with certainty that being in the presence of a tiger heightens all your senses even if you're on top an elephant. And when a protective tigress gives an intense low growl vibrating through everything in its path, it is a good time to move away without any fast movements that would trigger the tiger's instinct to attack.

"I've never experienced an animal so ferocious. You have to respect their territory as much as the animal itself. I backed up to search for another camera angle, but it was kind of a wake up call to how magnificent a tiger can be." Amore also woke up to the knowledge of how few tigers are left in the world. Ten years ago there were 10,000; today there are less than 5,000. With

extinction likely over the next five to ten years, she has set out to save them.

Ten Years Later

In Santa Ana, California, far from the tiger reserves of India, a tigress and her offspring move across the wall of a darkened theater, in such high definition clarity that viewers might fear they will draw her attention with a single sound.

The images are part of a new exhibition, "Tigers – Tracking a Legend" representing a culmination of Amore's decade of work with wild tigers. Newly opened at the Santa Ana Discovery Science Center, Amore designed most of the interactive activities herself, with the help of Exhibit Engineering of Pensacola, Florida, Digital Solutions in New York City, and Sharp Electronics. Five large Sharp® Professional Series LCD monitors spaced throughout the

exhibition preserve the high definition clarity of the images with such success that the exhibition literally immerses the visitor, allowing them not just to see the tiger, but to be the tiger.

"Getting footage of a wild tiger once is hard enough. To get it consistently enough to do a one hour film, that's a little harder," says Amore. She started her quest in India in 1999, but it wasn't until the following year that she came upon a pair of mating tigers. Over the next two years she documented the tigress, her two litters of cubs, even the transition of an older male into an ascendant male who fought his father for dominance. All of these events, recorded in high definition clarity in the wild, often from on top of an elephant with a ten-foot tripod, have come to life in the Tiger Exhibition.

Cat Tales

Amore wanted to tell the story of these

five tigers in such a way that people would empathize and care about them. With so much going into the gathering of her material, Amore was determined the story would lose nothing in the telling. She wanted the very best visual technology she could find. "People have lasting memories through imagery," says Amore. "This is a ten year tour and these monitors are going to run all day. I needed reliability, durability and credibility in the way they deliver HD. Sharp was the monitor I wanted to use."

According to Bruce Goldstein, Senior Manager, Business & Design Strategy for Sharp, the Sharp professional displays offer several advantages over other flat panels. Reliability is a big factor in a show like this, where the monitors will run all day and all evening for months at a time. With a 60,000-hour rated lifespan, someone using a Sharp display for 16 hours a day, seven days a week could expect it to run reliably for over 10 years. An anti-glare coating on the screens enables exhibit designers to use bright lighting without worrying about the images washing out. Most important, 1920 x 1080 resolution and an exceptionally high-contrast image lets viewers discern details they would otherwise miss.

Sharp teeth, Sharp Claws, Sharp Monitors

The story begins on a Sharp PN-465U 46" monitor at the very entrance to the exhibition, where visitors first meet the five tigers. A DVD plays and replays the initial video through a constant loop. After visiting the elephant camp, the photographers hut and learning "Twenty Ways to Track a Tiger," visitors start on the animal's senses. "Talk Like a Tiger" gives visitors the chance to choose on a touch screen which tiger they want to be, then combine the tiger's audio with vivid imagery on another 46" Sharp monitor.

The monitor mounted in "Muscles in Motion" shows how a tiger walks and runs in HD animation. Finally, a small



30 seat theater runs several short HD films about the animals on the largest Sharp monitor, a 65" PN-G655U. "The 65 inch monitor is awesome," says Amore. "This monitor has direct input from a hard drive, not a disk. Just put the show in there and it works consistently."

Amore put a fifth 46" monitor in "Carnivore Capture," where visitors can become a hunting tiger in HD. "You hold on for dear life and learn about a concept called "LOCK," says Amore, "how a tiger leverages its legs, the onslaught of the claws and how she delivers the killing bite." All of this brought to life by the HD imagery shot in the wild and preserved by the Sharp monitors. Combine this with the unique rail-mounted viewer that visitors can slide to reveal a CT scan of a tiger, the 22 by 8 foot digital climbing wall tiger cub survival game complete with sensors and sound effects, or the compelling 8 by 6 foot murals all around and you have total immersion in the world of these big cats.

Which is exactly what Amore wants. "The high touch - high tech is the ticket," she says. "How a viewer interprets a story often depends on the different types of shots. I kind of go for the close-ups that pull you in or shapes

that create the strongest memories, so I used maybe 60% close-ups and 10% wide views, the rest medium shots.."

Traveling Tigers

"Tigers-Tracking a Legend" is a traveling exhibition and Amore is currently negotiating with other museums and science centers around the country. The concept of high definition video is gaining high acceptance in museum exhibits because of visitor demand. Visitors often have HD televisions and home theaters and the museums must compete.

"What the HD videographer is after is usually a 1920 x 1080 resolution at 30 frames per second, so everything is extremely sharp," says Amore. "But if you don't capture it initially you don't have the clarity later. Of course, when you're dealing with endangered wild animals you want every detail, because you're not going to get a second chance."

Those details will continue to amaze visitors as Amore moves the exhibition around the country, and the world, over the next decade, continuing her mission to open our eyes to the plight of the wild tiger.