

Habitats of Dominica: A Documentary Video

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Abstract

The purpose of this project is to capture the various habitats of Dominica on video and to give a brief summary of the characteristics and species in each habitat. We filmed on location, using a tripod and a Panasonic Palmsight PV-L657, which uses vhs-c tapes. We captured general views from each location and focused in on some more prominent species of plants and animals. Using Voice-over technology, we included narratives describing the habitats in detail. We used our sensory observations to paint a mental picture in each narrative.

Introduction

There are twelve habitats included in the Documentary. We listed them in order of decreasing elevation. They include Elfin Woodland (filmed at Freshwater Lake), Montane Rainforest (filmed at Boiling Lake), Rainforest (filmed at Emerald Pool), Secondary Forest (filmed around the Springfield Station), Dry Scrub Forest (filmed at Cabrits), Savanna (filmed at Scott's Head), Coastal Woodland (filmed at the Carib Territory), Coastal Beaches (the Atlantic and Caribbean, filmed at Scott's Head, Batalie Beach), Lakes and Rivers (filmed at Freshwater Lake and Boeri Lake), and Thermal Habitats (filmed at Boiling Lake). For each of the above habitats, we listed specific observations including elevation and location.

Materials

Panasonic Palmsight PV-L657

VHS-C cassettes

Tripod

Studio 400 movie editing software

PC- compatible Computer with:

- Intel Pentium
- Microsoft Windows 98 operating system
- VGA card, DirectX 5.0-compatible; 256 colors minimum
- One available serial (COM) port
- 16 MB (or more) of RAM
- Hard disk with sufficient space for Studio 400 movies (1 hour requires 150 MB)
- CD-ROM drive
- Sound card, DirectX 5.0 compatible
- Speakers
- Microphone

Methods

We first made sure that the tape that was in the camera was not pre-recorded. The camcorder was mounted on a tripod. We filmed habitats the various habitats of Dominica that we were going to use in our video. When we returned to the lab we used the Studio 400 program to capture the footage. We rewound the tape, clicked on “start capture”, and when the screen turned black we pressed play on the camcorder. After the footage was captured we edited the footage. We went through all the scenes and edited out the blurry, rocky footage that we could not use. We then organized it into sections according to habitat. These habitats were organized in decreasing elevation, from the Elfin Woodland

habitat to sea level. For each section we included a view of the habitat, plant species and animal species found there, and a closing scene. We then identified the species that were used in the video. We prepared a script that includes a brief summary of the habitat. We mentioned elevation, average tree height, rainfall, and other generalized facts. The last step was to combine all the footage together. In the final product voice-overs were used to explain what is seen in the film. We also used background music to make the film more appealing to the audience.

Discussion

During the making of this documentary, we ran into a number of problems. First, the camera we had didn't seem to connect with the Studio 400 hardware and the computer. We couldn't find a way to override a "Smartcable" apparatus and allow the camcorder to download the footage on to the computer. The camera and software we used had been successfully operated for about 3 years prior to this film. The owner, however couldn't recall how the system was set up. In addition, the laptop we were using crashed every time we opened up the software. We tried reinstalling the software, but to no avail. The laptop refused to allow the upgrade disk to function, and the program would not run without this disk. We found another camcorder that was more compatible with the Studio 400 hardware, and we planned on using a desktop computer that would run the software. Our plan was to package the computer and monitor in boxes that we would check as luggage for our flights. When we arrived at the airport on the morning of our flight, we found that the airline would not let us take boxes of that size onto the plane. Dr. Lacher, one of our professors, had a digital movie program on his Macintosh computer. We found another digital camera to take with us. When we arrived we found that none of

the computers the school had sent with us was actually able to operate the Studio 400 software. The whole time we had been trying to work out computer problems, we were filming everything on the original camera that didn't work as a back up. The camera we brought to film everything did not work because the battery charge malfunctioned. We ended up using a student's personal laptop to edit and prepare the footage. We found that the software not only worked, but it worked with the original camera that we had been filming everything on as backup. Though that the audio from the tapes was not recorded on to the footage, we obtained a microphone and applied voice-overs.

Apart from having problems with the computer and software, we had problems with the footage. We had to return to Middleham Falls, Cabrits National Park, Syndicate, and Batalie beach to re-film with a tripod because of the amount of bumpy footage. We also had to return to Emerald Pool because we accidentally re-recorded over the original footage that we had. The tripod was not taken to Boiling Lake because the hike was hard and long, but we did film some of it.

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