

Friends of Nature

Friends of Nature (DR Ramasjang, Copenhagen, Denmark) is a 22-minute weekly reality series for children ages 4 to 6. In this program, children participate in a club, *Friends of Nature*, to help them learn about and care for animals (cf. illustration 1). There is always room for injured animals at the club house, where supplies for wild animals are kept. There is a first aid pack, food, shelter, walkie-talkies, and the animal ambulance - a 4-wheeler that lets children get there on the double when animals are in trouble (cf. illustration 2). Today, friends Ebba and Anton are on duty (cf. illustration 3). Each child is introduced using digital graphics and rock music, and we learn a little about them. Ingrid, a conservation officer, orients the children to their tasks while on duty. Ingrid explains that a blue light is used as an alarm when an animal is in trouble. Ingrid says they can help take care of animals today, but first they will make a nest for a grass snake (cf. illustration 4). The nest will be made of animal dung and the children will use a shovel and a wheelbarrow to collect it (cf. illustration 5). Today the children will care for orphaned ducklings. Ingrid shows the children ducklings in a box and explains what they need to survive without their mother. Anton and Ebba go to work making a suitable habitat for the ducklings. They place a warming light near the straw and crate shelter (cf. illustration 6). They prepare a pool of water for the ducklings. They make a board to display in the clubhouse with instructions and information about the ducklings. After hanging the board, they turn their attention to building a nest for the snake. They work together. When something is heavy, they share the load. When they split up, they use walkie-talkies to communicate. They meet near the horses and sheep, where they finish making the snake nest. Then the alarm goes off. Anton and Ebba jump up and run. There is a musical interlude while the children travel to the animal rescue site in the 4-wheeler. They meet Michael, who tells them ducks are trapped in a courtyard and nets are needed to get them out. But the ducks are hiding among the plants there. Nets are used to capture the mother and nine ducklings. The duck family is taken to a lake where they are released (cf. illustration 7). The *Friends of Nature* experience the pleasure of their successful rescue. Back at the camp, Anton and Ebba check on the snake's nest. They spread a blanket on the ground and Ebba plays a song on her guitar. "Come out, grass snakes," she sings (cf. illustration 8). They find a snake and touch it before it moves away. It is the end of the day and the *Friends of Nature* talk about the fun they have had.

Friends of Nature was a finalist and placed third in the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2014 in the up to 6 nonfiction category.

INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS' OPINION

International experts shared their opinions about *Friends of Nature* during the discussion sessions at the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2014. All seemed to agree there is a lot going on in this program. Some felt that more time could be allotted for the presentation of each task, thereby allowing concepts to cohere and make more sense. Some suggested using only one story per episode. There was much discussion about whether the program was more natural or more artificial in terms of the adult presenters, the uniforms, the animal ambulance, and the heroic image of the children and their club. Several experts wondered if the branding made the program more interesting for children to watch. A few experts favored a universal approach to the subject. They liked the idea of depicting children and adults working together, taking care of animals, and learning to handle animals without the need for heroic measures. Many liked it a great deal.



Ill. 1: *Friends of Nature* is a club for children who want to help animals



Ill. 2: Using a 4-wheeler as their ambulance, children rescue animals in trouble

Screenshots from *Friends of Nature* © DR Ramasjang



III. 3: Ebba and Anton are on duty today



III. 4: Ingrid, a conservation officer, helps the children learn what to do



III. 5: Children collect dung to make a snake's nest

"I thought it was a very fun show." (male expert, Italy) "I quite like these types of shows because they are connected to nature...I found it interesting that the ducks aren't going to bite your finger and the horse is not that scary." (female expert, Macedonia)

"What I particularly liked was the casting. You selected two friends and showed the natural reaction between them." (female expert, United Kingdom)

"It is something kids would love to do." (female expert, Germany)

"I do think children will like having the sense of driving in the car." (female expert, United States)

"It disturbed me. They should save the animals for the sake of the animals, not because they are a part of something and wearing uniforms." (male expert, Germany)



III. 6: A lamp is used to keep the ducklings warm



III. 7: After rescuing ducklings, they are released into a pond



III. 8: Ebba sings a song and Anton sees a snake

Screenshots from Friends of Nature © DR Ramasjang

"I liked the uniforms. It means it's the same mission for all the kids. If I was a kid watching I would have wanted to be one of those kids." (female expert, Norway)

"I liked the fact that the grown-ups are there for a reason. They are not funny grown-ups or being crazy." (female expert, Norway)

"I laughed at the end when the girl played a song to get the snake." (female expert, Sweden)

Elizabeth Spezia, PhD student, Southern Illinois University, USA

Target Audience 7.64	Idea 7.62	Script 7.09	Realization 7.87
Average Score per Category by experts' voters at PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2014			