

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# **“SoCal SNOWY OWL” TAKES FLIGHT AT NEWPORT BEACH FILM FESTIVAL**

*The Bird that United a Community*

**BLUE RIDER PICTURES PRESENTS**  
a documentary short directed by Christopher Angel



**Official Selection - Newport Beach Film Festival – World Premiere**

**LOS ANGELES, CA** - October 8, 2024: “SoCal SNOWY OWL” a documentary short from Blue Rider Pictures directed by Christopher Angel about the rare, celebrated sighting of a snowy owl in Southern California in 2023, will receive its world premiere at the Newport Beach Film Festival on Friday, Oct 18th, 7:00 PM at the historic Lido Theater.

The short film is produced by Walter Josten, Patricia Josten, Philip Braun, Roy Rausch, Adam Ansari and Denver Holt.

Also known as an Arctic Owl, Polar Owl and white owl, the enigmatic arrival of this majestic bird - typically found in Arctic tundra - in the Southern California suburb of Cypress, attracted considerable attention from birdwatchers and scientists. The snowy owl became an overnight national media sensation, also drawing visitors from across the region and significantly impacting the local community.

“SoCal SNOWY OWL” centers on three residents of Cypress, California, who come from diverse backgrounds and find comfort in a rare visitor - the snowy owl. This extraordinary bird encourages them to not only connect with nature but also with each other, bringing positive change to their lives. The documentary explores the owl's unexpected journey, the excitement it generated within the birdwatching community, and the environmental factors that may have influenced its migration to Southern California.

The film also highlights the snowy owl's unique beauty with its striking mainly white plumage and the mystery surrounding its appearance. Another layer of meaning is added to this remarkable sighting as the snowy owl also carries deep symbolic significance in Native American lore.

Producer Walter Josten states: “I feel very fortunate to have been able to see the snowy owl several times in Cypress when she visited and witness the amazing community that came together to support and welcome her. It was an astonishing sight to see dozens of photographers in the streets of Cypress standing with crowds of spectators, television news crews and wildlife experts, all in complete silence, hoping to catch a glimpse of the snowy owl.”

Denver Holt, an internationally recognized wildlife biologist, snowy owl expert, head of the Owl Research Institute, comments: “Records show there has not been a sighting of a snowy owl in Southern California in the last 100 years. We may never know how this owl made it to Cypress, but as they generally don't go that far south, this was a significant and exciting sighting.”

Following the premiere screening of “SoCal SNOWY OWL” on October 18 will be a panel discussion with Denver Holt as well as Gail Richards from Sea and Sage Audubon, Melissa Borde from Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve and Joanne McDermott from the Orange County Bird of Prey Center who will bring a Great Horned Owl as a “Special Guest” to the screening and panel discussion.

The second presentation of the short on Thursday, Oct 24th, 7:00 PM at Big Newport 4 will feature a Q&A after the screening with director Christopher Angel and producer Walter Josten from Blue Rider Pictures.

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**Your coverage is invited:**

Please contact Roy Rausch: [royrausch@yahoo.com](mailto:royrausch@yahoo.com) / Tel: 714-809-5801

**For further information or to schedule interviews  
To cover and attend the red-carpet premiere**

**Screenings at Newport Beach Film Festival:**

Fri, Oct 18th, 7:00 PM @ Lido Theater

Thu, Oct 24th, 7:00 PM @ Big Newport 4

**ABOUT THE PANEL PARTICIPANTS**

Denver Holt is the founder and lead researcher of the Owl Research Institute, located in Montana. He is a wildlife biologist specializing in owls and has over three decades of field experience in raptor research. Holt has contributed significantly to the understanding of owl biology, particularly in the areas of behavior, habitat, and breeding. He has published numerous papers and is frequently involved in conservation efforts to protect owl species and their ecosystems. Holt's work is recognized internationally within the wildlife research community.

<https://www.owlresearchinstitute.org/>

Gail Richards is an active member of the Sea and Sage Audubon Society, which is dedicated to bird conservation, education, and research in Southern California. The organization offers programs to engage the community in birdwatching, habitat restoration, and protecting wildlife. The Sea and Sage Audubon is well-known for its conservation efforts and community involvement in protecting bird habitats.

<https://seaandsageaudubon.org/>

Melissa Borde is an Environmental Scientist/Reserve Manager for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. She is responsible for overseeing the daily management of the entire Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, a protected area in California known for its wetlands and diverse bird species. The reserve is a key location for wildlife observation, habitat restoration, and environmental education.

<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Lands/Places-to-Visit/Bolsa-Chica-ER>

Joanne McDermott is Director of Administration at The Orange County Bird of Prey Center (OCBPC), a state and federally-licensed 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in Orange County, CA, dedicated to treating and rehabilitating injured raptors and returning them to the wild. The Center believes that education is the best long-term solution to prevent and mitigate many of the challenges that raptors face and that raptors play an integral role in the balance of nature. The Center reintroduces raptors under specific conditions: following state and federal guidelines, respecting current wild raptor population cycles and considering environmental factors.

<https://www.ocbpc.org/>

**ABOUT BLUE RIDER PICTURES**

Blue Rider Pictures founded in 1991 is an independent motion picture, TV and new media development, finance services, production and distribution company.

Blue Rider and founder/producer Walter Josten have a combined **200+ films** and TV projects to their credit, and expertise in all facets of production, marketing, and distribution.

<https://blueriderpictures.com/>

## **ABOUT THE FILM**

Title: SoCal SNOWY OWL

Distributor: TBA

Genre: Documentary Short

Rating: Unrated

Running Time: 34 minutes, USA 2024

Language: English

Director: Christopher Angel

Produced by: Walter Josten, Patricia Josten, Philip Braun, Roy Rausch, Adam Ansari, Denver Holt

Cinematography: Charles Swanson

Screenings at Newport Beach Film Festival:

Fri, Oct 18th, 7:00 PM @ Lido Theater

Thu, Oct 24th, 7:00 PM @ Big Newport 4

<https://nbff2024.eventive.org/films/66cf7c3b1d28ba001fe8b507>

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4iml6nePDY>

Official websites: <https://socalsnowyowl.com/> / <https://blueriderpictures.com/socal-snowy-owl/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/socalsnowyowl>

IMDB: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt33264837/>

Original event news coverage playlist by Roy Rauch

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLb0DNZSxikxNA3CxdpK3vAtLuCQeNV9E7>

'Astonishing' snowy owl spotted in Southern California neighborhood'

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/01/05/world/snowy-owl-cypress-california-rare-sighting-scn/index.html>

'A Rare Snowy Owl Is Captivating Southern California'

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/a-rare-snowy-owl-is-captivating-southern-california-180981382/>

'Extremely Rare' Snowy Owl Sighting Transfixes a California Suburb'

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/31/us/snowy-owl-california.html>

## **ABOUT NEWPORT BEACH FILM FESTIVAL**

The Newport Beach Film Festival seeks to bring to Orange County the best of classic and contemporary filmmaking from around the world. Committed to enlightening the public with a first-class international film program as well as providing a forum for cultural understanding and enriching educational opportunities, the Festival focuses on showcasing a diverse collection of both studio and independent films. The Festival supports the creation and advancement of innovative and artistic cinematic works from both emerging and seasoned filmmakers and proudly embraces the passion, vision and independent spirit of these talented artists. With the integration of the local community and educational institutions, the Festival stimulates an interest in the study and appreciation of film and encourages people of all ages and backgrounds to participate.

<https://newportbeachfilmfest.com/>