But Why: A Podcast for Curious Kids

The Kratts Take On Wild Animal Adventures

April 21, 2017

[00:00:20] [Jane Lindholm]
This is *But Why,* a podcast for curious kids, from Vermont Public Radio. I'm Jane Lindholm. Today we're going to bring you a special episode in-between our regularly scheduled shows. When I'm not working on *But Why*, I have a regular job making a radio show for VPR.

[00:00:39] [Jane Lindholm].
It's called *Vermont Edition*, and on that show I interview all kinds of people who have connections to Vermont and New England. We talk about politics, breaking news, arts, culture, sports and anything else you can think of. The other day, I got to talk with two brothers who I thought you might enjoy hearing from. Chris and Martin Kratt are better known together as the Kratts. They have spent the last 20 years making educational TV shows for kids that introduce you to all kinds of animals around the world. The show you might see these days is called *Wild Kratts* and it's a PBS kids show. They've also done shows called *Zoboomafoo*, *Kratts' Creatures* and *Be the Creature*. Martin and Chris spent a lot of their summer time as boys in a place in Vermont called the Northeast Kingdom. It's a very rural and still kind of wild part of the state up near the Canadian border. So we're going to play you my interview with them in this special episode; and they answered a lot of questions from kids who called in. Martin Kratt started our interview by telling me about how those summertime adventures in Vermont were really important in getting him and his brother interested in animals.

[00:01:55] **[Martin Kratt]**
We grew up in New Jersey, right? So we had some wildlife, you know; but it was, you know box turtles in the backyard, frogs and stuff and what we ended up doing are our parents ended up getting some property in the Northeast Kingdom and we would go up there as soon as school let out and camp out all summer long you know. So, it was like getting water from the old farm well and just being out in nature. So we'd see porcupines, raptors, you know. We really got to go wild an, and just run around and experience nature.

[00:02:26] **[Chris Kratt]**
Yeah, there was, there was no building whatsoever. So we had a pop-up trailer and a bunch of tents. We had a potty tent with a little portable potty in it. [Laughter]

[00:02:37] [Jane Lindholm]
That's pretty good though, that's practically civilization.

[Chris Kratt]
Yeah.

Martin Kratt]
Yeah.

[00:02:40] **[Chris Kratt]**
So, um so, and we did. We lived there for two months, yeah and

[Martin Kratt]
We learned a lot of things, like if you left your tent open during the day by nightfall there'd be a lot of snakes inside.

[Jane Lindholm] [Mixed voices laughing ensues]
Really. So you learned that by experience? Did you do that on purpose?

[Kratt]
We learned that, yeah.

[Kratt]
Yeah and you know we always used that on purpose. Oh yeah, definitely, that way it was easier to find snakes because they were all hiding in the grass. But if you left your tent open you'd, and they'd crawl in, you'd see all the snakes.

[00:03:04] [Kratt]
And I think also we got a lot of good training for our, our creature adventures, you know, for camping out, because when we were developing our ideas um for children's wildlife films for our first year of *Kratts Creatures* we would spend six months camping out in the Amazon in the Peruvian Amazon you know. So our early training in the Northeast Kingdom prepared us for that. I really believe it.

[00:03:25] **[Jane Lindholm]**
You must have also had parents who tolerated this kind of behavior or who appreciated that their sons were going to open the tent so that the snakes could come home and that they, they, I don't know, did they enjoy that, Chris, or did they just tolerate it?

[00:03:40] **[Chris Kratt]**
No, they did enjoy it for sure. They; that was one of the reasons they originally came to Vermont was because they were into skiing. They were part of a ski club and in a boating club. They were into sailing. So they liked, liked the adventure sports that Vermont had to offer. So that was one of the reasons we were here in the first place.

[00:04:00]
And yeah, we would bring our dogs up and they were totally game at having one of our.

[Kratt]
Oh we had a St.Bernard that really likes porcupines and never learned her lesson. Yeah a lot of trips you know to the vet. A lot of trips to the vet taking out the deep ones. Yeah. We had a dog that had puppies underneath the trailer one year and that was really exciting.

[00:04:21] **[Jane Lindholm]**
And yet you didn't become veterinarians, instead you became….

[00:04:24] **[M Kratt]**
I almost did. I was at Duke studying to be a veterinarian, getting ready for vet school. I wanted to do something with endangered species veterinary medicine but then I took a course on amphibian ecology where we just looked at all the rep, I mean all the amphibians, the frogs and salamanders in North Carolina. And I was taking a course on, and a video course too, so I ended up making a video about hellbenders which are three

foot long salamanders that live in the Appalachians, southern Appalachians. And that kind of switched my thinking you know.

[Jane Lindholm]
To TV star.

[Kratt]
No,no, not at all. Really. Just, just, because at that time we realized, it was like in the late 80s, and there were no kids' wildlife shows and we were talking and we realized there's There're kids who are the number one group of people who love animals and nobody's making a show just for them. So that's kind of how we got on that track; and our goal was to just introduce kids to all the amazing animals we share this planet. And so they could learn about them and, hopefully, hopefully, you know, get a connection with them that would last a lifetime. So that's something we could do for endangered species and then all the kids who watch our shows. Who knows what they can do.

Commercial

[00:05:32] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Here's a clip from the beginning of an episode of *Wild Kratts* focusing on rhinos,

[00:05:40] *[Wild Kratts]*
"The Rhino's Horn".
It's impressive size and it's charging power make the rhino one of the most impressive animals on Earth. Imagine if we had the creature powers of the rhino. What if@#*?

[00:05:55] **[Jane Lindholm]**
All right. Now picture Chris and Martin Kratt have transformed into their animated alter egos to investigate the powers of the rhino. And we are deep into this world of the rhino now. And let's get to Edward now, calling in from Waterbury Center. Hi Edward, go right ahead.

[00:06:10] **[Edward]**
Hi guys. First off I'd say big fan. My kids love your guys' show, any one of them, ah, and my daughter had a question for you. She ah. We've got a couple of dogs and a couple of cats and she was curious what kind of pets you guys have.

[00:06:24] **[Martin Kratt]**
Oh, hey Edward, how's it going? That's good. Well I have two cats right now.

[Jane Lindholm]
That's Martin.

[Martin Kratt]
Martin. Yeah.

[Chris Kratt]
And I. My dog recently died, so I don't have a pet right now. But um, but um we, we, we like to travel on adventures and see animals in the wild too so, so, um, so that's what I've been doing a lot of lately.

[00:06:46] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Yeah, we also got that question from Ben in Montpelier who wanted to know what pets you have at home and it's curious because you guys do so much at Creature Adventure. Do you see? So. Martin, you have the two cats, do you see your cats as wild creatures or are they just the same pets as everybody has at home?

[00:07:03] **[Martin Kratt]**
Oh yeah, I do see some similarities. Like my cat, for some reason chuffs like a tiger does, you know. And I've, I've heard tigers in the wild in India chuffing, you know. I can't believe it sounds like “pooff, pooff,”you know. That's what the tiger does. I don't know why my cat does that but you know what Chris was saying is like we've been travelling around the world so much. Like, like we kind of like you know, you might be tempted to like; oh I'd love to have a falcon you know what I mean?

Lindholm giggles

[00:07:27] [Kratt]
And actually, I did once when I found, like, a sparrow hawk that was in a drought. It was like it was the young of the rear and was dying so I just kind of rehabilitated them and then let them go again. But, but you know our, our, our connection with animals has always been in the wild like for example on *Be the Creature* we would live with a group of animals for a month at a time. And those documentaries were based on whatever stories developed out of what was going on in their lives. So we would live with a pack of African wild dogs and just follow them around all day for a month.

[00:07:57] **[Jane Lindholm**]
And you really would, I mean that's really how you did that? That, that production was live, with those creatures, and study them for a month, not just drop in and be the celebrities?

[Kratt]
You know we would always be around, yeah. We'd sleep by their dens and you know get up with them and go off on the hunt with them and try to keep up when we were following African wild dogs.

[00:08:18] [Kratt]
It was so hard to keep up with them in the jeep. I think during that adventure we got 21 flat tires. [laughter]

[Kratt]
And, and then when we were also uh, with, we were living with a group of chimpanzees in Kibale Forest of Uganda and they would be hanging out, you know, we'd be hanging out with them, and then suddenly they signal to each other somehow because they would all be moving down the trail like out on a hunt because they were out hunting monkeys so we'd just grab our camera gear and try to keep up with them and they'd split off and I mean you know, so it was uh, yeah that's what we did on on *Be the Creature.* And we never knew what was going to happen. We went out there without any story, you know, it just, whatever the animals lives, what is happening in their lives became our documentary. [**09.23]**

[Kratt]

[00:08:58] And you know in regards to what you were asking about before, like seeing wild features in our domestic pets, we kind of have always looked at it the opposite way. We like to look at animals in terms of them being fellow creatures, you know, rather than scientific objects, and kind of thinking about them in terms of hey what are they afraid of, what makes them happy you know, and, and, and that's kind of the way that we look at animals.

[00:09:48] **[Jane Lindholm]**
How do you balance that for kids? So because we know that kids who are able to experience wildlife, to even, to touch it, to see it, to watch it, to be right there with it are going to have a deeper appreciation for and probably a more active connection to the conservation of wild lands and wildlife. And yet you, you guys also have this ethos of, leave the animal where it belongs. You know, we're not taking animals, you don't have them in your live show up on stage with you. So how do you balance that desire to show kids really up close and personal what animals are like but also instill in them this idea that wild animals are wild and they need to stay that way?

[00:10:03] [Kratt]
Well I totally agree with you. It's so important to have a connection with animals for kids. So for kids, having pets is so, so important. Like my son had a bearded dragon, right? Which is a lizard from Australia; but bearded dragons, you can get, you know captive bred. And so the kid gets a connection with the reptile. It was a great pet that we had. Um but you know, I wouldn't want to go take a Komodo dragon out of the wild and make a Komodo dragon my pet for a lot of reasons. So it's kind of just finding that balance, and it's all about learning about the animals, and know what are good pets to have and what animals should better be left to live free and in the wild. Rescues are a part of that too, you know.

[00:11:06] [Kratt]
You know zoos can provide something really great by showing people animals that they would normally not be able to see in the wild. The key there is that we continue to strive to make zoos good places for animals to live and treat them properly. And there are probably some animals that shouldn't be in zoos at all.

[Jane Lindholm]
Like what?

[Kratt]
Well like you know animals that need a lot of space, like a wolverine, it's a roamer. You know, you don't see many in zoos at all. But you know bears, polar bears, they're all roaming animals and they need a lot of space.

[00:11:24] **[Jane Lindholm]**
You know the other thing that's happening in the world right now is that people are gravitating towards cities and we're shifting that balance of the, um, human population in the world living rurally into a human population that the majority live in cities and that changes our relationship with wildlife. I mean in some ways it's, it's potentially a good thing because you can preserve landscapes and wildlife and have contiguous habitats but it also means that there's a potential for less of a connection with wildlife and more kids and

adults who are just experiencing wildlife either on TV or in zoos like you were talking about.

[00:12:01] [Kratt]
Well I agree that it's really important to get out into the wild and experience it for yourself, going on hikes in parks. You know, even if you live in New York City, you can go out to Central Park and experience some nature right? Um, and, and wherever you can go to get outside and have your own wildlife experience is awesome. And frankly that's why we end each show with, “keep on creature adventuring and we'll see you on the creature trail.”

[00:12:51] And really one of the most gratifying things for us in terms of impact of our show is that if kids and their families turn off the show and go outside on an adventure together and actually experience nature. That's really the kind of excitement that we're trying to instill.

[Kratt]
And we've gotten a lot of feedback when that happens.

[00:12:45] **[Martin Kratt]**
We get a lot of letters saying, you know, our family goes out and has our own creature adventures. We go hiking. Sometimes they pretend they're me, Chris and Aviva and … The parents get a certain role. And other times they just, you know, go out and we've actually bumped into kids on the creature trail.

[Jane]
Really?

[Kratt]
Like yeah. We were out in the Tetons and we were working on a show on bears and we come around the corner, and there's a family who was watching the *Zoboomafoo*. Ya know? So yeah and say, “We saw you out here.” That's right.

[00:13:14] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Well, and you also have kids who give their own money and families who give their money to you to help conservation and who say you know this is really important to you I'm taking that money out of my piggy bank and I'm going to give you my three; you tell the story of the kid who gave you three dollars and 17 cents.

[00:13:28] [Kratt]
Yeah, yeah. And that, that actually inspired us to do a big project, um, during the *Zoboomafoo* time where we did a national tour where we had chosen zoos and the Gap Foundation an old Navy supported. That for every kid that came out they made a donation and we raised over a million dollars through kid action. It was actually the kids who did it by coming out and, and, we we, um, our, our nonprofit Kratt Brothers Creature Hero Society purchased wildlife habitat for grizzly bears out on the Rocky Mountain Front in Montana. And so that land is just protected for mother grizzly bears coming out of the mountains and giving their cubs, you know, some sustenance in the spring. There's also wolves and everything there too. So it's really a really important piece of wildlife habitat and kids protected it.

[00:14:38] [Kratt]

And kids voted on what animal they wanted to help.

[Kratt]
Yeah

[Chris Kratt]
We did, you know an online survey and survey throughout the tour and they wanted to help grizzly bears and that's what we did.

[00:14:24] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Is that what you expected? Did you think grizzlies were going to win?

[Kratt]
No, we didn't know. We just hoped they didn't say something like manatees because how could we, like, buy enough water, a water habitat?

laughter

[00:14:32] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Yes grizzly water.

[00:14:34] We got a question from Erica who is watching our Facebook Live video and asks, "Martin is wearing blue. Is Chris wearing green? It looks like it. Do you wear blue and green every day just in case someone recognizes you?"

[00:14:46] And what Erica is referring to here is that,
yes, you wear blue and green on your shows. And Martin you always wear blue.

[Martin Kratt]
Well I can tell you one thing, I don't wear green.

[Jane Lindholm]]
Ever?

[Martin Kratt]
That's Chris's color.

[Jane Lindholm]
Do you do this out in public? You purposely wear the color you're supposed to wear?

[00:15:01][**Chris Kratt]**
You know sometimes when we're out doing stuff related to Wild Kratts, for sure, because it gets confusing if I'm wearing green and he's wearing blue or if I'm wearing red. It just doesn't make sense.

[00:15:09] **[Jane Lindholm]**
But this is radio, you didn't have to dress in character.

[00:15:13] [Kratt] mixed laughter
[Kratt]

Well we like our colors. We do like our colors in real life. I mean we've been, we've been caught wearing a different color before, but.

[00:15:22] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Let's go to some of our kid callers. Aiden is on the line with us from Morrisville. Hi Aiden, go right ahead.

[00:15:29] [Aiden]
Um, How fast do Peregrines falcons go?

[00:15:33] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Okay, so Aiden you're asking how fast do Peregrine falcons go? Do you guys? So you're getting some tough questions on the fly right now. Do you know how fast?

[00:15:42] [Kratt]
Yeah, that's a good question. They can go about 220 miles per hour.

[Chris Kratt]
In a stoop and a stoop is when they drop, tuck their wings and drop from the sky like a stone. Or a missle. [both brothers talking at once]

[00:15:53] [Kratt]
So they're a missile harnessing the force of gravity and that's one of the things we do in *Wild Kratts* too is like we look at animals in terms of their creature powers, those special amazing things that each animal can do and they're often tied to a science concept, like in this case. Great question Aiden and their, their speed, their creature power of speed is tied to the force of gravity.

[Other Kratt]
Gravity. And so we always put a curriculum element into the show, like because that's a physics concept right?

[00:16:27] [Kratt]
So you can do a show on skunks where you introduce a chemistry concept. So we're always very mindful of that you know. And one other thing about *Wild Kratts* is not, it, it's primarily about turning kids on to animals and introducing them to our fellow creatures; but it's also about turning kids on to science, you know and STEM content.

[00:16:46] **[Chris Kratt]**
Yeah, we even did an episode on electric eels and were able to talk about electricity through animals right?

[Martin Kratt]
You have currents.

[00:16:55] **[Jane Lindholm]**
How much do you know when you're starting out and how much do you have to do the research? I mean, you must have a body of knowledge now that helps you and animals that you can think of? Oh this is similar to when we looked at this other animal, and it's a very similar, you know, biology or chemistry. But you must also have to do a lot of research and have a team that does some research with you?

[00:17:13] **[Martin Kratt]**
Oh yeah, and every episode we do, every animal, even a familiar animal, we learn something new. You know one great example is walrus which was one of our first episodes of *Wild Kratts*. Um, I was amazed when I was working on the script and the research that walrus have this thing called the pharyngeal throat sack that they can blow up and, it, it's like a built in life preserver that allows them to float on stormy arctic seas and take naps.

[Jane Lindholm]
Whoa!

[Martin Kratt]
So I didn't know about that you know. I knew a lot about walrus, I thought. Right? So every episode we're learning something new you know and it's so exciting and then we can share that with kids and we really try to find a lot of information that you won't find in like, the general texts.

[00:17:55] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Chris you wanted to jump in?

[00:17:56] **[Chris Kratt]**
So, I was going to say that last point. We really dig for that information, you know, that that little known information and sometimes the cutting edge information that scientists are just discovering about animals because you know there's always, there are always new things to learn about animals and that's one thing that we find every time we go on a creature adventure as well is that you know it's really magical when you find, when you see, for example, a Tasmanian devil climbing a tree. At the time that what we saw and filmed that years ago, that was something they were not just finding out, that, that young Tasmanian devils do, um, so. To get away from the older ones.

[Martin] and [Chris] simultaneously
To get away from the older ones.

[00:18:37] That's why they're doing it, and to get hired to smell out the carcass. But also to get away from the old.

[00:18:45] [Kratt]
And if you're ever on Komodo Island checking out
Komodo dragons you'll notice, you only see big ones walking around right? You know, like where are the Komodo dragon hatchlings and you look up in the trees and they're all up there living on the branches. They have a totally different lifestyle when they're young because that's where they can survive. If they come to the ground they usually get eaten by, you know, by the bigger ones.

[Chris Kratt]

And there's a parallel right there, that you were talking about, two different creatures, a similar method, and even grizzly bears use that too. The young, young grizzly bears are good climbers.

[00:19:14] Male grizzly bears are always out to get em.

[00:19:17] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Today we're talking animals with the Kratts, Martin and Chris. They are known to legions of children, and former children, and parents of children and parents of former children as the hosts of several popular TV shows that have introduced kids to the remarkable world of animals. Mary posts, “Seeing Martin and Chris brings back so many great memories of watching *Zoboomafu* with my son who is now 20. We had so many good laughs from the many times you both fell into large mud puddles that have been and there was often a closet that remarkably never got cleaned and things kept falling on you all the time.” Martin and Chris laughing above.

[00:19:53] **[Martin Kratt]**
We call them Kratt falls. [Ha, ha, ha]

[Jane Lindholm]
You know, on that note, we actually got a note as well from Angela who posted on my Facebook page saying, “My now 19-year-old texted me when he found out that Zoboomafu had died because he was so sad. He loved the Kratts.” So Zoboomafu was a lemur and you had a puppet lemur but you also had a real lemur, who, who, um was a character and was Zoboomafu. Can you describe a little bit for people, who are less familiar with the *Zoboomafu,* how that worked?

[00:20:22] **[Martin Kratt]**
Well um ah, Zoboomafu who came out of um. Like, when I was at Duke, they have Duke Lemur Center where they breed endangered lemurs in captivity and ah you know because there's Madagascar, their only home is losing a lot of habitat. And so I was a student keeper, you know, feeding all the lemurs and everything and then we went off on our adventures and one of um our, um my professor Pat Wright, she had discovered the golden bamboo lemur in Madagascar, a new species, in the 80s. It was like crazy that that happens right? She was just so amazing. And uh so Chris and I went to her research station to do some videos on lemurs and uh that was like kind of our second expedition where we were trying to get Kratts Creatures off the ground. And we did Kratts Creatures and then years later we were, like thinking about our preschool show and we came back to lemurs. And so when we filmed it. Duke is where we went to film Jovian, the lemur the real live leader who was Zoboomafu. So we basically took the set of Animal Junction down there and set up a set where we could film under a big circus tent where we could film Jovian jumping all over the place. So Jovian was the main lemur but his mom Flavia and his dad Nigel also sometimes filled in for him. So it was a family of three lemurs that were the real Zoboomafoo. And then we had the puppet in the studio and we kind of inter-cut them, you know, so, so Jovian lived a long life and he had a lot of kids and grandkids.

[Jane Lindholm]
And they were actually featured in his obituary. You leave something, it was like nine children, ? grandchildren and two are on the way or something like that.

[Martin Kratt]

He was a really gentle lemur. He was, he was awesome, yeah. We had a lot of good interactions with him.

[00:22:05] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Let's go to Cadence who's calling in from Windsor. Hi Cadence, you're on.

[00:22:11] [Cadence]
Um, what is it the favorite animal that you did an adventure with?

[00:22:15] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Oh yeah. So what's your favorite animal adventure? Nathaniel in Norwich, who's 8, also wants to know what your favorite creature adventure is. So Cadence and Nathaniel are both wanting to know..

[Martin Kratt]
Oh, our favorite creature adventure or our favorite creature that we have an adventure with?

[00:22:28] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Oh, well why don't you give us both?

[Chris Kratt]
I'll give you one of the favorites that we've done.

[00:22:33]
I mean there are so many, it's really hard to pick. But one of them that comes to mind is when we were swimming with spotted dolphins in the Caribbean. And these were wild dolphins, you know, not trained ones or anything; but um, we jumped in the water and you start swimming as actively as you can. And they're such smart, curious, fun loving animals that they come over and they started copying our moves. If we did a twist in the water they would twist. If we did a roll they would do that roll and they were basically playing with us for a while. And that's really special, when a wild animal comes to check you out and play with you.

[00:23:12] **[Jane Lindholm]**
And they decide that they want to. So, Martin, what about for you? Maybe an adventure you haven't had.

[00:23:17] **[Martin Kratt]**
Yeah. For season 6 of *Wild Kratts*, one animal that I really want to do an episode on and a creature power suit of is the snow leopard. I could die and to get there to see the snow leopard. Cause they're a really cool big cat

[Jane Lindholm]
But, but, they're hard to find.

[00:23:32] **[Martin Kratt]**
Yeah really hard to find.

[Jane Lindholm[]
So do you really think you're going to be able to do that?

[00:23:36] **[Martin Kratt]**
Yeah, we're going to try. One of our, when, when we were first starting out with *Kratts Creatures,* we went looking for the um giant river otters in the Amazon, and we went way, way up river where, if you'd gone a little farther there were uncontacted indigenous people still and you weren't allowed to go there. Uh and we found that there were only 5,000 in the world and we found a whole family of giant river otters that we would, that we basically followed around in a little boat and filmed. And that actually became the pilots for *Kratts Creatures*. They're featured in the pilot.

[00:24:07] **[Jane Lindholm]**
We got a question from Liz who says, “My 3-year-old wants to know what's your favorite Vermont creature?”

[00:24:13] **[Martin Kratt?]**
Aw oooooh, that's awesome. I, I’d have to say the fisher.

[Jane Lindholm]
Really?

[Martin Kratt]
I've seen two fishers in all my time here, and, and they are awesome.

[Jane Lindholm]
They are awesome.
I've never seen one in the wild.

[00:24:24] **[Martin Kratt?]**
They are really awesome. No, I've seen two, only two.You know, in all the time. So you know, keep looking, you'll get lucky. But they are a misunderstood creature.

[Jane Lindholm]
They are not cats for one thing.

[Martin Kratt]
No, they’re not cats, they're big muscled legs, big weasels, and they are just really, really spectacular creatures. So I'm very pro fisher.

[00:24:40] **[Jane Lindholm]**
How about you Chris, do you have a favorite Vermont creature?

[Chris Kratt]
You know, I'll go with, I’ll go with, uh, the goshawk.

[00:24:44] **[Chris Kratt]**
Yeah, yeah they're really cool and I get to see them fairly regularly around my place here. It's really, really interesting to watch. One time I watched the Mahanta morning dove and it was just spectacular.

[00:24:57] **[Jane Lindholm]**
See, you guys are going predator?

[00:24:59] **[Jane Lindholm]**
I, my favorite Vermont creature.

[Martin Kratt]
Yeah, what's yours?

[00:25:02] **[Jane Lindholm]**
The Eastern salamander. The red eft,

[Chris Kratt]
Oh yes.

[Jane Lindholm]
I mean they're just so beautiful. Those. And when they're on land like that, that bright orange color and then you can see them get big and turn a little bit darker and get ready to go back in the water.

[00:25:14] **[Jane Lindholm]**
And I learned recently, sorry this is host prerogative, about something called the unken reflex. Have you ever seen this?

[Chris Kratt?]
No, what is it? We'll put it on our show.

[Jane Lindholm]
So, well, when a salamander is, you know, crawling along and then it thinks something is going to come and get it, It curls up into like a u- shape, right? And I one time saw it and thought that somebody had ridden over the salamander with a bicycle because it looked like it had just had. But it's actually a defense mechanism that they do partly to look dead and partly to show they're sort of bigger and scarier than they are.

[Kratt]
It totally worked on you.

[Jane Lindholm]
It totally worked on me. I ran away.

[00:25:48] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Let's go to Parker who's calling in from Cabot. Hi Parker. You're on the air.

[00:25:56] **[Parker]**
I have a question of have, um, have, have they ever transferred a animal to another habitat so they could do better?

[00:26:08] [Kratt]
Well, you know one, one thing we did while filming for *Wild Kratts* relatively recently is we had the opportunity to rerelease a Florida panther back into the wild in the Everglades. And they are super endangered animals and I'll tell you that's in our Florida panther episode.

[Kratt] Actually that's in our Brouwer Florida Panthers.
[Other Kratt cuts in]]

[00:26:28] Yes, yes, it's in the live action Florida panthers episode. Have you seen that one, Parker?

[Parker]
Yeah.

[Chris Kratt?]
Good, good, that was spectacular. Watch, watching that panther run back into the wild was amazing. Actually and that reminds me, one, I think Catamount, may be my favorite, Catamount is my favorite Vermont animal.

[Jane Lindholm]
That's because they don't live here anymore?

[Kratt]
I think they do. I'm polling for them.

[00:26:50] Yeah you know actually we did a Tasmanian tiger episode and I don't know if you heard the recent reports that they have sightings, credible sightings, in northern Queensland now.

[Jane Linholm]
Wow.

[00:27:01] Yes ,and so it's true. I mean there may be catamounts that are passing through, not yet a breeding population. But you think they're coming back, Martin?

[Martin Kratt]
I think so.

[Jane Lindholm]
All right.

[Martin Kratt]
I hope so.

[Jane Lindholm
Linda in West Glover sent us a note to remind us that *Wild Kratts* isn't just for kids. She says, "I'm 75 years old and I'm addicted to the show. I discovered you a few years ago. I traditionally watch the *PBS News Hour* every evening. Then I used to switch over to one of the major networks to get their take on the news. One night I got so frustrated with all the advertisements in the network news broadcasts that I started clicking around to different channels to see what else was on. I just covered *Wild Kratts* and I was instantly hooked on the show. I love the combination of the live introduction and wind up to the show with animation in the main part. The animation is wonderful. So are the animated characters themselves. How do you get the animals to be so expressive?"

[00:27:51] [Kratt]
Oh that is so great, thank you for the comment. Yep, one of the things that um has been amazing about this show, that we're really proud of, is it's broad audience range. Like, we have, we have kids, you know in preschool watching the show. We have older kids 10, 11, 12- years old watching the show.

[other Kratt]
College kids.

[Chris Kratt?]
And then, of course, we have the, the woman that wrote in. So, um we're really proud of that of being able to. It's unusual for a show and being able to reach so many people.

[Martin Kratt?]
But if you love animals, you love animals. It doesn't matter what age you're at. There's a lot of animals.

[00:28:25] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Alright,so, there's that; but, we also got a note from Daria who says, " My kids were big fans of the *Zoboomafu*. My mom's friends used to joke that kids watched for the leaping lemur, the moms watched for the Kratt brothers." Which I know this is not the first time you've gotten that. You, you've um got a lot of parental fans who, who watched for what they thought were the two cute guys on the show. I mean that must be kind of an odd feeling as you do a show for kids.

[00:28:51] [Kratt]
Oh. yeah. I guess.

[00:28:55] **[Martin Kratt]**
No, it was great. You know it's a family show, so you know it's we're really glad for our audiences. And actually, you know what, I just remembered something. One of.

[Jane Lindholm]
That's a nice turn. Nice pivot there Martin.

[00:29:05] **[Martin Kratt]**
No, one of the things, when we really knew that, that *Kratts' Creatures* was hitting an audience, we were on a tour, um like a month after it had launched, and we were doing a book tour and were at um Barnes and Noble here in Burlington and suddenly we had this crowd come out that it got, we were on the second floor, you know, and the escalator goes up to the second floor, and the crowd got so big, line-up on the second floor, that the fire marshal had to come and turn off the escalator.

[Chris Kratt]
because people couldn't get off the escalator anymore.

[00:29:39] **[Chris Kratt?]**
So then we were like, wow, this show might be, be, becoming a hit. You know?

[Martin Kratt]
And that happened here in Vermont. Yeah.

[00:29:46] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Let's go to Max who's on the line with us from Lyndonville. Hi Max. You're on *Vermont* Edition. Go right ahead.

[Max]
Have you ever held a piranha?

[Jane Lindholm]
Have you ever held a piranha?

[Martin Kratt?]
Yes, yes we have held a piranha, down, down in the Pantanal.

[00:29:53] [Kratt]
The Pantanal is in Brazil and it's the largest wetland in the world and there are lots of piranhas down there. And so we were filming capybaras which are the largest rodents in the world. And ah, and some other things down there and yeah we found some piranhas.

[other Kratt?]
And the reason, probably the reason we held them is because we were fishing for them and then we had them for dinner.

[Jane Lindholm]
So how did you keep your fingers out of their mouth?

[Kratt]
Oh you had to be really careful. You don't want to slip, right, when you get the hook out? Yeah. It's a little tricky.

[00:30:27] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Jenny in Cornwall says, "Please send along our thanks for such a fantastic program. My son retained so much information from watching *Wild Kratts*. It was really impactful in such a positive way. We still talk about honey badgers."

[00:30:40] [Kratt]
Ah, okay, that's one of the episodes of Season 1.

[00:30:43] **[Jane Lindholm]**
So let's hear from another kid who's calling in. Adeline who's calling in from Poultney. Hi, Adeline.

[00:30:50] [Kratts]
Hi Adeline

[Adeline]
How fast is a cheetah?

[00:30:55] Martin Kratt?]
Another good question. Yeah cheetahs run about 70 miles an hour and I think on 89 you can have your parents drive that fast and show you, ok, how fast it is? Just look out the window and see everything whizzing by. That's how fast cheetahs run.

[00:31:08] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Or put your hand out the window. [laughter]

[Kratt]
to drive legally for science. For education.

[00:31:21] **[Jane Lindholm]**
We got a question from Claire who says, “My whole family adores your show and many dinner and bedtime, we the parents learn wild and wonderful animal facts from around the globe. Thank you. Do you have some women scientist friends from around the globe who could be your special guests in the intro so that my son and daughter can see women tromping around the wilds being their awesome selves too?”

[00:31:40] [Chris Kratt]?
Well that's a great question. And you know what? The Aviva character, we really wanted to make sure there was a strong female presence in *Wild Kratts*, so that's why the character Aviva, who is actually inspired by female scientists at MIT who were working on, on different research and engineering.

[00:31:59] [Martin Kratt?]
So, so, basically that's why all the technology and all the engineering and invention comes out of a female character’s work.

[Chris Kratt]
And we do meet lots of female scientists in the field doing great research and oftentimes in some of the live action segments we are with them learning about their field work. And uh,

[00:32:21][Chris Kratt?]
Like I think the burrowing owl episode.

[Martin Kratt?]
The burrowing owl and elf owl series we saw some really great research that was being conducted by some female scientists and same with dolphins.

[00:32:33] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Do you guys have any siblings? Are you two the only children?

[00:32:35] **[Martin Kratt]**
We have sisters, twin sisters between us. I'm the oldest and we have twin sisters Christine and Susan and Chris.

[00:32:42] **[Jane Lindholm]**
And are they animal lovers too?

[00:32:44] [Martin Kratt?]
Two sisters are veterinarians.

[Chris Kratt]
So we were all biology majors.

[00:32:50] **[Jane Lindholm]**
And what are they when you, when you're all together for family gatherings, do they gently tease you or are they jealous? What about having the two celebrity brothers?

[00:32:58] [Kratt]

Oh no, not at all. Just like the old days. And now all of us have kids around, and you know, so.

[00:33:05] **[Jane Lindholm]**
So, well, how do you balance that?
You're doing all of this travel with your live shows and you, still, doing show production? And, and I don't mean to age you but you're middle aged guys now and you don't look like you're slowing down. But it's a different lifestyle when you're 20 than when you're 45. So how do you balance that life, work balance?

[Kratt]
We'd be out for months at a time filming.

[00:33:25] **[Martin Kratt]**
Well we're not live in the Amazon for six months anymore, intense for sure. But you know, actually that, that having our own kids kind of played a part in the development of Wild Kratts. I mean it was kind of two things. We had our own kids and it was hard to be away for months at a time. You know filming *Be the Creature* you know, with being out in Uganda for a month with chimpanzees and our kids were at home growing up so we didn't want to miss out on that. And also one of the toughest things about doing wildlife documentaries is you know animals do certain things but you can't always get it on film. Right. Right. You could spend months and months out trying to get, you know, a giant river otter having an encounter with a jaguar but you might never get it even if you spend ten years out there. So we realize, with those two reasons, If we did an animated show we could show everything that animals do and we could be home more. So that contributed to the creation of *Wild Kratts.*

[00:34:27] **[Chris Kratt]**
And besides that you know like all our previous shows have been live action as Martin mentioned and there's more of a more of a documentary feel to any live action show right? But with animation we were able to have more control over the story as well as the behaviors like Martin were, was talking about. We can have creature powers suits and villains and so um all those things contributed.

[00:34:53] **[Martin Kratt]**
And a lot of *Wild Kratts* is about really putting yourself in the place of the animal. What if I could fly like a peregrine falcon. What if I could swim like a sea turtle. You know and so really the creature power suits are a representation of that like experiencing these amazing abilities of animals and that's at the core of *Wild Kratts.*

[Jane Lindholm]
And how involved are you then once the animation part of the story takes over?

[Martin Kratt]
Well Chris and I take hold of the scripts and then we have a great team of researchers and science researchers and animators who bring it all together.

[00:35:27] [Chris Kratt?]
Yeah. So we're, we're involved throughout the process. I mean this is why, this is why we're doing this. You know we would never be taken away from the TV show to do other things.

[00:35:38] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Today we're talking with Chris and Martin Kratt. They're behind the educational TV shows: *Kratts Creatures; Zoboomafu; Be the Creature; Wild Kratts*. Let's go to Hadrian calling in from Richmond.

[00:35:49] Hi, Hadrian.

[Hadian]
Why are saber-tooth tigers extinct and regular tigers not extinct?

[00:35:56] **[Jane Lindholm]**
All right. So why are saber-toothed tigers extinct but regular tigers are not extinct?

[00:36:01] [Kratt]
Oooooh really good question. Yeah, well you know saber-toothed tigers were bigger. They focused on bigger prey like woolly rhino and woolly mammoth. And usually, you know, oftentimes what happens with with extinction is animals that need more space need more resources.

[00:36:20] They became extinct earlier, so you know, probably some of its prey species became extinct. Then the saber-toothed tigers couldn't make it either. But because they live in different parts of the world, like tigers, tigers lived in, live in rainforests and saber-toothed tigers lived in North America where glaciers and everything else.

[00:36:45] **[Jane Lindholm]**
So while we're talking about animals that are extinct, Dalia wants to know about animals that aren't extinct. She's five and she says, “What are the species that have survived the longest on Earth and why have they been able to stick around for so long?”

[00:36:57] **[Martin Kratt]**
OK. Well you can see one of them now that spring’s come. In summer look for dragonflies. Pretty much the exact same kind of dragonflies that might land, you know, on you or on your porch, they were landing on dinosaurs.

[00:37:12] So yes, they've been around a long long time. Yeah.

[Chris Kratt]
And when Martin says look for dragonflies, one of my favorite things to see in nature is a dragonfly.

[00:37:22] They spend the first part of their life in the water and they’re predators in the water. They can even grab minnows and eat minnows. But they come out when it's ready to turn into a dragonfly, kind of like a butterfly does, they come out of the water, they, they sit on a rock and they just bust out of their skeleton and they come out like an alien and they look like a totally different creature, like when they're in the water they're just little bug like things, but then they just become flies.

[00:37:52] **[Jane Lindholm]**
I've never seen that.

[Kratt]

And they puff up their wings.

[Kratt]
And it's amazing.

[00:37:55] **[Jane Lindholm]**
That's so cool. All right, let's hear from Tanner in Dorset. Hi Tanner.

[00:38:00] **[Tanner]**
Hi. I really like your TV show.

[Kratt]
Thanks, Tanner.

[00:38:04] **[Tanner]**
And have either of you been attacked or injured by a wild animal?

[00:38:12] **[Martin Kratt]**
Oh yeah. Well, you know Chris? It was really funny, because Chris once got tackled by a Komodo dragon.

[mixed laughter]

[00:38:20] **[Jane Lindholm]**
That was said like a brother. It was really funny.

[00:38:22] **[Chris Kratt]**
Yeah, that's true. I was; I turned to run away from this Komodo dragon and I tripped and before I knew it he was climbing on top of me. Fortunately I had, I got my foot under his chest.

[00:38:34] **[Chris Kratt]**
And so I was able to like give him a little shove to the side.

[00:38:38] And skittle out of there.

[Jane Lindholm]
They have sharp claws and they are not nice.

[00:38:42] **[Chris Kratt]**
Yeah, but, but, the amazing thing was, afterwards, I look over at Martin and he was standing there with his mouth wide open in surprise. And you hadn’t moved an inch to help me.

[Martin Kratt]
It kind of happened fast.

[Jane Lindholm]
Yeah, yeah, excuses.

[00:39:00] [Kratt]

Oh, and one time also, I was, we were following lions all around in Africa in our open jeep, and we felt, because they fall asleep a lot.

[00:39:08] [Kratt]
Right? And it was the middle of the night. They fell asleep and we fell asleep in the jeep and I woke up because like something was licking my boot and I looked up and there was a big male lion because my leg had gone off the side of the jeep.

[00:39:24] He was just tasting it'd take a bite. So I was lucky there.

[00:39:27] **[Jane Lindholm]**
That's kind of a far cry from opening your tent to let the snakes in. You know you're sitting there, sleeping in the jeep and the lion is licking your leg. Yeah, pretty good life though. Pretty good lifesaver has had so far and pretty amazing adventures that you're also able to bring to kids. Are you going to keep doing this for a while?

[00:39:42] **[Kratt]**
Oh yeah, as long as we can. Oh yeah absolutely. I mean *Wild Kratts* alone we have an almost limitless supply of episodes to do like we can't get to animals fast enough. Put it this way, one of our new episodes is on penguins. You know where 138 episodes into *Wild Kratts* and there animals like snow leopards. We haven't done episodes on pygmy marmosets. I mean you could just rattle on and on.

[00:40:06] We got a great letter recently from a kid who is like, yeah you know, they obviously, they don't understand, like the business of making TV shows and how much time and money and everything, they said,"You know I've seen, I've seen all the episodes already. I haven't seen any new ones recently.

[00:40:24] **[Chris Kratt]**
Can you guys make some new ones? I'm thinking maybe you can't think of any animals to do shows on so here's a list."

[00:40:33] **[Jane Lindholm]**
All right well we are going to look forward to seeing you guys take off all the animals on that list. Chris and Martin Kratt are behind educational TV shows *Kratts Creatures*, *Zoboomafu*, *Be the Creature*, Wild Kratts. Thank you so much for spending the hour with us. What a pleasure to talk with you both.

[00:40:46] Thanks a lot. It's great to be here. **[Both Kratts]**

[00:40:49] **[Jane Lindholm]**
I hope you enjoyed listening to the Kratts. If you have your own animal adventures, let us know about them.

[00:40:55] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Send us a picture or a note or record yourself talking about your favorite animals.

[00:41:02] **[Jane Lindholm]**
You can send pictures or files or questions of any kind on any subject to questions@butwhykids.org.

[00:41:10] **[Jane Lindholm]**

Have an adult help you record them on a smartphone. Tell us your name and where you live and how old you are. *But Why* is produced by Melody Bodette and me, Jane Lindholm for Vermont Public Radio.

[00:41:23] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Our theme music is by Luke Reynolds. We'll be back in one week with an all new episode. Until then.

[00:41:31] **[Jane Lindholm]**
Stay curious.