

## **ARTISTIC APPROACH**

We tell this story through the lens of George Hunt and Molly Warner – literally. The majority of slides and photos in the film were taken on their personal cameras as their life stories unfolded. We've added archival video and audio from the 1970s, which take us back in time and contextualize the events.

From the outset, we made a conscious effort to include George and Molly in the development process, ensuring full transparency in the approach. We're grateful for George and Molly's contributions, and we know that their involvement is integral to the project's success. By also physically taking George and Molly back to Santa Barbara Island, we come full circle in the very place they discovered the birds in 1972.

As directors, we have a unique connection to this story as it affects so many areas of our personal and professional lives. Both of us are a part of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as natural history filmmakers. In addition, we both call Southern California our home, and take pride that it unfolded right here where we live.

The story is important to us because of both the role that the "lesbian seagulls" played in LGBTQ+ civil rights in America, and how the study redefined the study of animal behavior. George and Molly's discovery was one of the first moments in the history of science that the LGBTQ+ community was acknowledged and validated. It challenged the leading argument at the time, a cornerstone of the Christian public morality dating back centuries, that being homosexual "wasn't natural." As weird as it may be to find inspiration in something as commonplace as a seagull, the waves that George and Molly's research made in its time still reverberate today. Even those who aren't a part of the LGBTQ+ community can learn from this story the power of perseverance in the face of adversity.

## **CO-DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT (ANGEL MORRIS)**

I'm thrilled to be working on "Love Birds" because it has allowed me to combine my two passions of wildlife and conservation with telling important LGBTQ+ narratives.

Becoming a natural history/documentary filmmaker has been my dream since childhood. However, when I got older and realized that I was queer and nonbinary, and I became discouraged from that path when I didn't see anyone like me in that role. Lack of visibility on and off-screen, combined with not having access to anyone that could give me opportunities to break into this industry, caused me to change routes and pursue product and brand videography.

However, when the pandemic hit the US, it forced a lot of us to think about our lives in a way that we hadn't had the chance to before. I realized that I owed it to myself to not let this passion go, and so I quit my job as a barista and made the terrifying decision to pursue filmmaking. Thanks to the help of many organizations that are pioneering inclusion and access, I landed a job as an editor for a natural history production company. I'm finally able to begin building my career as a documentary filmmaker, including getting mentorship from my supervisors to produce and direct this film, which is my second documentary.

That there are still also so many important LGBTQ+ narratives to tell. Through this film, I hope to inspire others who have felt discouraged in their dreams to take the leap and follow their passions, no matter how scary it may seem.

--ANGEL MORRIS

## **PRODUCTION HISTORY**

In early 2023, directors Angel Morris and Elliott Kennerson were working as colleagues at a science and nature documentary production company in San Diego. Angel is trans, Elliott is gay, and they are 20 years apart in age. Being queer people in the natural history genre made them anomalies in the industry and also drew them together.

Angel came across the fascinating story of “lesbian seagulls,” and the directors reached out to scientists George Hunt and Molly Warner via email. To their delight, they received a response and began initial development meetings. The discovery of the story coincided with the application window for the “Other Voices” grant from NBC News Studios. Angel and Elliott submitted the project and were one of six teams to make the first cut. Each team was given a small grant to develop a proof of concept and travel to New York to pitch for the full grant of 100K ([Deadline story](#)).

At a pitch event at the DOC NYC festival in November 2023, *Love Birds* and its directors won the highly competitive grant, and production took flight the next Spring.

The film was completed in March of 2025 and premiered at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Film Festival in April.