



THE CHILENO VALLEY NEWT BRIGADE

A grassroots effort to save migrating newts

BY LORI EANES

FILMMAKERS GO TO SCHOOL



ABOUT THE FILM

The Chileno Valley Newt Brigade

Director: Lori Eanes (US 2025)

13 min | Grades 8-12

For thousands of years newts have been migrating to Laguna Lake in Petaluma, but unfortunately a road has gotten in the way. When rancher Sally Gale notices that many were being run over she organized The Chileno Valley Newt Brigade, an all volunteer group to help the newts get across the road safely. This inspiring film is about a grassroots effort of community activism to save the newts.

"Each time we rescue slippery, spotted beings, we attest to their right to be, to live in the sovereign territory of their own lives. Carrying salamanders to safety also helps us to remember the covenant of reciprocity, the mutual responsibility that we have for each other."

IMPACT

The Chileno Valley Newt Brigade begins with the story of how a concerned Petaluma rancher formed a volunteer group to try to save migrating newts from being run over on a nearby road. Students will learn about newts, and see them in their natural state. They will hear interviews from scientists, volunteers, and kids and learn what is being done to help them. It's an inspiring story about a small but charismatic animal and why we should care.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

Lori Eanes is a San Francisco-based portrait and food photographer who loves storytelling and recently has begun making short environmental films.



VIEWING GUIDE

SMALL CREATURES, BIG CONNECTIONS

How to Use This Viewing Guide: Most people walk through the world noticing the biggest, loudest, or fastest things. The film you are about to watch isn't just asking you to watch a tiny amphibian, it's asking you to notice relationships that most people overlook. As you watch, become an ecological detective. Look for connections hiding beneath the surface. You may discover that the smallest creatures reveal the biggest truths about how people, nature, and communities are connected.

Think Like a Scientist The Web Test - As you watch, spot living things or non-living things and write down what you notice. - Pick one or more to start a chain and try to determine the links between these things. - Whenever something happens, ask yourself what else is connected to this?	What patterns do you notice?
Think Like an Ecosystem Things Most People Wouldn't Notice - The film asks you to notice what is usually invisible. - As you watch, write examples of what you notice and why it might matter.	What happens when one small piece disappears?
Think Like a Neighbor Why Care? - Whenever someone takes action, ask what motivated them? - Choose three people and explain their motivation.	Who helps without expecting recognition?
Think Like a Storyteller Ripple Moments Look for moments when one small action creates a much larger impact.	Why tell the story of a creature many people never notice?

EXIT TICKET

QUICK REFLECTION

What is one “newt” in your own community - a person, place, or problem that most people overlook but deserve more attention. Why?

ADMIT ONE

ADMIT ONE



THE RIPPLE EFFECT

HOW THE FILMMAKER'S MESSAGE REVERBERATES

How to Complete This Artifact: Because of the stories they tell, and how they tell them, documentary films have a ripple effect. *The Chileno Valley Newt Brigade* is about how a local, grassroots action is essential to fixing the massive disruptions human infrastructure causes to natural ecosystems. The camera lens is more than an optical tool. It dictates the emotional distance, psychological perspective, and relationship between the viewer and the subject. The aperture shapes reality, turning objective observation into a subjective, empathetic experience. Use the graphic organizer of the camera lens and aperture to demonstrate the ripple effect and lasting impact of the filmmaker's documentary storytelling.

In the Center of the Camera Lens: Write the focused story being told in the film by creating an original tagline (3-10 words) that captures the theme or message you are taking away from watching.

In each of the Camera Aperture Blades respond to the following prompts:

- A moment from the film that resonates - something you will continue to think about.
- An emotion you felt while watching the film - what did you feel and why?
- Something you learned from watching the film - what do you understand differently?
- One reason to care about and conserve these species - why is it important to keep common species common?
- A social or real-world change you want to spark - something you'll do differently, or an action you'll take in your own life or community.
- How the film sparks public discussion - what conversation should continue after the credits roll?

