In May 2011, the James Scholar Media Team took a field trip to see the nature documentary film *African Cats*, which tells the true story of two animal families in the wild by using real-life footage. This is the third release by Disneynature, and it is directed by Keith Scholey and Alastair Fothergill. The film centered on two cat families and how they teach their cubs the ways of the wild. One of the cat families is led by Fang, a lion who strives to defend his family from Kali, the lion pride leader of the southern kingdom. And it also tells the story of a mother cheetah named Sita and her five newborns. Life on the savannah is full of challenging conditions and eager competitors. With so many species competing for space and food in the savannah, the animals must figure out the best way to survive.

This is the most spectacular documentary film of wildlife I’ve ever seen, not only because of its engaging story, but also because it has so many beautiful scenes.

The film delivers a heartwarming message about the power of a mother’s love. The lion cub Mara's mother, the lioness Layla, was injured during a fight with enemies. Realizing that she might not keep up with the pride, for Mara’s sake she went to her sister Malaika, who had cubs of her own. Layla begged Malaika to reconnect with her so as to maintain a spot for Mara in the pride. Right after Mara was accepted by her aunt, Layla slipped away from the pride and found a place to pass away quietly. At this time, I feel mothers are so great. They will try every effort to protect their children even if sacrifice is inevitable.

Another scene that highly impressed me was Sita calling her cheetah cubs in the darkness. While Sita's cubs were young and playing around in the savannah, the lion Kali and his five sons were on patrol. Sita, seeing it as a danger to her cubs, goaded Kali and his sons so as to get them tired and away from her cubs. However, after the confrontation, the cubs were scattered. Sita called for her cubs
throughout the night, but only three of them were back with Sita by the next morning. Although she continued to call to them, it was known that the missing cubs were taken by the hyenas. Seeing Sita standing on a mound lonely and deplorably, I felt really sad about this great mother.

The camera work is incredibly well done in this film, especially with the close-up and slow motion shots of the cheetahs running, as well as astonishing scenery of the African savannah. The film also features many kinds of animals from giraffes, elephants, ostriches, wildebeests, etc., but the real stars are the lions and cheetahs. So it must be a good film for the nature lovers as well.

All in all, **African Cats** is a beautiful nature documentary film with a richly layered and engaging story. Mother Nature brings the story to life, and the footage of the African savannah is so breathtakingly striking. I really enjoyed this JSMT field trip!