

# A Wild Life For Wildlife

By Angela White

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Natural history and wildlife cinematographers, Mauricio and Julia Handler, have captured some of the most stunning moments imaginable for HBO Max, Netflix, BBC, National Geographic, CNN, and ESPN. Their traveling studio of choice? A Supertramp Flagship LT. Dive in...

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## A Wild Life for Wildlife

Have you ever wondered how wildlife cinematographers capture a once-a-year bird or animal migration from a remote part of the world in spectacular clarity? Here's a clue; the migration almost certainly didn't happen when the cinematographers first arrived. Nor was the location necessarily near decent roads, an actual town, reliable cell service, or anything resembling the comforts of civilization.

Upping the ante, the professional cameras and equipment they use require as much technical knowledge and creative ability as the cameras and equipment used on major Hollywood film sets. In fact, the cameras and equipment they employ are often exactly the same, and the lighting and outdoor conditions are far from the controlled situations Hollywood directors and crews enjoy.



The point is this; if you want to capture a convenient wildlife video, get a goldfish. If you want to pursue serious wildlife cinematography, you need serious grit, skill, and gear that will make your left and right brain twinge, your body simultaneously sweat and freeze, and credit cards cry until they simply combust. Don't have what it takes? Stick to adorable cat videos.

With that in mind, allow me to introduce three of the most creative and steadfastly determined fellow truck campers on planet Earth; Mauricio, Julia, and Tristan Handler. Representing the human contingent, Mauricio and Julia are underwater cinematography specialists with celebrated work and films on major media outlets including HBO Max, Netflix, BBC, National Geographic, CNN, and ESPN. Tristan, their beloved canine companion, joins their truck camping adventures as they pursue and capture the wildlife events that leave the couch potato public in awe.

For the Handlers, a Supertramp truck camper is as much a place to eat, sleep, and shelter as it is a creative cinematography tool. And like nearly every tool this family acquires, it had to be multi-functional, extremely durable, and ready to tackle the road conditions, weather conditions, and who-knows-what conditions their chosen career presents on the average Tuesday. As they explain it, only a Supertramp was up to the challenge.

What follows is the inspiring story of how Mauricio, Julia, and Tristan became internationally recognized natural history and wildlife cinematographers, and fellow truck campers.





Above: Julia And Mauricio Handler

## **How did you get into photography and cinematography?**

**Mauricio:** I went to University and earned a degree in Fine Arts. After graduation, I was a freelance photographer and started photographing stories underwater. I lived in the British Virgin Islands from age 23 to 45. I was primarily a freelance photographer during that time.

Then I worked as an assistant underwater photographer at National Geographic Magazine, taught photography workshops, led expeditions, and worked on other magazine assignments. Along the way, I met Julia who became my employee. She is a huge part of my success.

**Julia:** Before I met Mauricio, I lived and worked in the British Virgin Islands as a reservations manager for a charter yacht company. Then I got dive-certified and helped with underwater lighting. We did big shoots on posh island villas and mega yachts.

**Mauricio:** I have the best deal because I can dream all day long saying that I'm working. Julia handles the day-to-day operations.



## How did all that lead to Aquaterrafilms?

Mauricio: I worked with National Geographic until 2009. I stopped because we wanted to re-focus on our expeditions and workshops.

In 2012, we started [Aquaterrafilms](#). Since then, we've been filming exclusively and working on major productions. We produce and market our own film projects, but we also film content and produce wildlife sequences for all the major global players. We are underwater specialists with extensive terrestrial and drone experience.

That's what led to the truck camper. We wanted to curve our international travel and expand travel in North America. We've already traveled the world, so now we want to cover stories and do documentary work here.





**Your work has been featured on HBO, Netflix, the BBC, National Geographic, ESPN, and CNN. How did your business attract these channels and networks?**

Mauricio: It's been a whirlwind. I was born in Chile, but did not grow up there. I only returned to Chile as a professional where I was the only underwater cinematographer. That led to a BBC shoot and then to other opportunities in Chile. I did six years of filming in Chile that ended a year and a half ago with a big production on CNN called Patagonia, Life on the Edge of the World.

It's a funny business in that you have to get the word out about your work. Then the producers get to know you. You have to have a good reputation and demonstrate that you have knowledge about the subject matter.

Then, four or five years later, there are new producers. Everything is always morphing and we have to be ready to take the hits and downturns.



**That happens in seemingly every industry, including truck campers. Tell us about your North American Waters project.**

Mauricio: We are currently producing a new series called North American Waters. Arrivals is Episode 1, which is a standalone pilot. Arrivals is ninety-nine percent shot by us in Maine. The first hour is in edit and, if it goes well, there will be two or three more episodes. It depends on how the market goes.

It may take the next three to four years to get the series out. If we want to film a migration, we might get a chance once a year for two weeks, or we miss it. Then we have to go back to that spot the next year. Some migrations happen at the same time. It's a slow process if you do it on your own. We are going to do the bulk of it, but then have small teams cover some additional portions. It's a team effort.

We've been filming the North American Waters series since before we got our camper. As soon as we took delivery we went straight to our next migration location.

Our intention is to sell the series. We have the trailer out and are expecting to be done with the edit in two to three months. When it's done, we hope to find a distributor or we would like to partner with a big producer so we can fund it and get on with it.

It will take place from Alaska to Labrador to the Florida Keys to San Diego and everything in between. If that happens, the whole purpose of our truck camper and our filming lifestyle is fulfilled. We are together on the road earning a living.





**After launching Aquaterrafilms in 2012, there was a ten-year period before you bought your Ram truck and Supertramp Camper. What were you traveling in, and where were you staying during this time?**

Mauricio: In 2005, after living in the British Virgin Islands, we moved to Maine and bought a Volvo XC70; a station wagon with all-wheel drive. We've had the Volvo since we moved here. We have camped, filmed, and filled the Volvo to the brim with our dog and camera gear. We traveled primarily around New England.

Julia: From 2012 to 2017 we also ran expeditions and filmed overseas. Most of the footage you see in our videos are from those trips.

Mauricio: For our workshops and expeditions, we'd hire a ship and bring photographers and filmmakers onboard and teach workshops. That's how we did things for years. Our truck camper is our yacht on wheels. We wanted a platform that we could have ready to go.

Julia: Our background comes from yachts. We love the beauty of small space efficiency and solar power. That was brewing in our heads.

Mauricio: We never owned a camper before. For about ten years we were obsessive-compulsive expedition vehicle researchers. In 2022 we finally committed to putting together our filming production rig, which we

named LyleXP.



## **A lot of truck campers are obsessive-compulsive researchers. How did that research finally bring you to a Supertramp?**

Mauricio: The reason for getting our one ton pick up truck boiled down to one thing; math. How much weight we intended to carry dictated our base platform and needed storage capabilities. We have about 600 to 700 pounds of gear which required our base platform to be heavy duty.

We waited for the right camper manufacturer to come along that could build the very best lightweight and efficient slide-in camper. That brought us to Supertramp Campers.





Our 2016 Ram 3500, XP Camper Tray, Bowen custom storage and garage, and [Supertramp Flagship LT](#) camper are the perfect combination for our personal and professional production needs.

We have Supertramp Flagship LT number five. We originally went to Supertramp to look at their hard sided pop-up prototype. We wanted an all-season camper with a low profile. They said they would sell it to us as long as we went to the factory to look at it. They knew we were going to change our opinion and get their new pop-up design.



Julia: When we saw the [Flagship LT](#), we knew that it was what we wanted; clean lines, efficient use of space, and simplicity. We got into the Flagship LT and it was amazing!

***“When we saw the Flagship LT, we knew that it was what we wanted; clean lines, efficient use of space, and simplicity.”***

Mauricio: When we agreed to buy it, there were a few things that we requested that are now standard, like the huge side Tern Overland window. We also wanted the Truma Combi Eco Plus, which allows us to heat the cabin and heat water using electric and propane.

We first went out to Supertramp in October 2021 and took delivery in March 2022. We were number 5. Number 6 is Keith and Kelsey’s; the [Founders of Supertramp](#).





## **Did the Ram 3500, XP tray, Bowen storage and garage, and Supertramp all come together as planned?**

Mauricio: Yes. We spent a day with Bowen installing our custom boxes and then went to Supertramp. Our camper fit perfectly; like a glove. Supertramp and Bowen worked closely together to make this happen.

We are happy to show off our Supertramp rig to people in the northeast. We love talking about our rig and like to inspire others. Kelsey and Keith of Supertramp are amazing. They are professional and are straight shooters. They have really thought about the efficiency of the product. They treat their employees well which is a testament to their integrity. We were fortunate to fall into their hands. With a young manufacturer, you never know, but it's been amazing.

***“We are happy to show off our Supertramp rig to people in the northeast.”***

# *We love talking about our rig and like to inspire others.”*

## **What’s behind your rig’s name; LyleXP?**

Julia: I came up with the name. “L’isle” in Scottish means the island, like the British Virgin Islands where we lived for many years. And the company who converted our truck used their XP flatbed. The XP part honors the history of our truck.



## **What’s the story behind your XP Camper flatbed?**

Mauricio: We were looking for a truck and found a listing for our fully built-up Ram in California. The truck itself had been converted by XP Campers (now Nimbl) to the specs we wanted and was in storage for years after XP Campers went into Chapter 11. The truck was considered a commercial truck in California, so they couldn’t sell it there without registration and additional documentation they didn’t have. There were no issues registering it here in Maine.



When we got the truck, there were only 1,200 miles on it. We are actually the first registered owners. We were lucky we could buy it. They shipped the truck to us with the paperwork. We bought it sight unseen.



### **What role did your Bowen boxes play in the final rig solution?**

Mauricio: Our rig is all about our gear. Before the Bowen boxes, we removed the rear factory seats and bought a Goose Gear rear seat delete system. It looks exquisite and gives us a hard surface in the rear seat area with some small storage underneath.



This allows us to put our tech cases on top while still having space for Tristan, our dog, and his bed. With the Goose Gear system, our camera gear and lenses can be stored in our truck.

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Everything else is in the Bowen truck boxes. We wanted to keep the camper clean. We have phones, computers, and chargers in the camper, but no lenses or cameras. We like the simplicity of having a camper without all that stuff. Having a comfortable space that's not cluttered is important to us.





We have a complete Bowen garage in the front, and two long side boxes on either side. One is split in two and the other is full length.



We gave Bowen the dimensions of our truck. The whole width garage has storage for tons of stuff and keeps the heavy weight in the front of the truck.





The longest storage box houses an 8-foot gazebo tent from Gazelle with a rain cover. On location, we take it out and set up camp. That gives us a space to keep our gear dry and protects anything we don't want in the camper. We also have our tripods and chairs in a storage box. In one of the two split side boxes, we carry extra water and additional gear that's not sensitive.





In the garage, we have stacked boxes. Radius Outfitters has soft boxes that we utilize extensively to store things like gear and a few bottles of scotch whiskey. If we're going over rough terrain, those boxes are soft and gentle on each other. We carry four to five of those in that area and our pelican cases for underwater gear. Radius also makes a garbage bin that's soft and keeps our truck clean.

Our truck bed has storage boxes underneath for recovery gear, a compressor, tools, hoses, dog food, and cleaning supplies. Our rig is triple purpose. It's a flatbed, has the storage boxes, and hauls our camper. We can take off the boxes and garage in just a few minutes utilizing the XP camper pins. It's just four pins and everything above it comes off. Our bed is 10 feet long. It has a 2 foot garage, and then the 6.5' boxes.

For every production we do, we have to tailor our packing. We always take too much clothing. Fortunately, Supertramp's cabover bed lifts and there's storage underneath for clothes and toiletries.



### **What do you like to do when you're not working on a professional project?**

Mauricio: We've done two round trips to Wyoming. We took the northern route through the Tetons and Yellowstone because we were going to a production festival out there. Moving forward, we are not going west unless we have a project. Right now we are concentrating on Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Maine. There are a lot of migrations down to the Chesapeake Bay.





Julia: We also go out for fun. We take weekends and primarily boondock all over Maine. There's free camping here in the wilderness. And we always carry our drone and long lens just in case.

[go\_portfolio id="lylebugout" margin\_bottom="20px"]

**Kelsey told us that you designed a bug-out screen for your camper.**

Mauricio: Here in Maine, the state bird should be the mosquito. They're so big we always want a bug screen; no matter what. We contacted a company called Rolef in Canada. They are a premier manufacturer of bug screens for vans. They had nothing for small vehicles. I contacted them and we worked for a couple of weeks on a design customized to fit our Supertramp. I modified it and sent it back until we ended up with what we wanted.

The screen only fits the Supertramp Flagship LT, so any Flagship owners can use it. You can roll up the center screen when you don't need it. When you drop it, there are magnets on the side. If you push the center, it opens. Then it closes behind you.





CONSIGNE DE SÉCURITÉ  
NE PAS LANCER L'ANIMAL EN L'AIR  
LE MISE À LA PORTE DE LA VOITURE  
SECURITY WARNING  
NE NOT THROW THE ANIMAL INTO THE AIR  
DO NOT OPEN THE CAR DOOR



Tristian has no problem getting in the camper with the screen down. He has learned to go through it. We leave it on our camper year-round. It's effective with bugs, but it's also a privacy screen. We just leave the screen and door open at night.

We are the exclusive sellers of this screen and make it available for other Supertrampers who want it. It's custom-designed for the Flagship LT. Kelsey and Keith have it. Brent at Bowen has it. It fits our entry door perfectly. It's part of the camper. We named our screen [Lyle's Bug-Out screen](#). We are developing other new products for our camper now.



## **I think we all can relate to mosquitoes and no-see-ums ruining a camping experience or two. Where has LyleXP taken you so far?**

Mauricio: We're different than others in that we want to get somewhere and stay for weeks on end. In one of the shots I sent you, LyleXP is at edge of the ocean at high tide with the water reaching the tires. We need to stay put to tell the story of the animals we're after. Our camper becomes an efficient platform with the comforts we need.

Our rig is now wired for Starlink, which will allow us to upload proxies. Proxies are small versions of our video footage that are easier to send via the internet. Production teams often want to see what we're up to in the middle of a shoot. Soon we will be able to use Starlink to upload our proxies.

We've also expanded our battery bank so that we can charge our drones, computers, and cameras. A portable Honda generator also comes with us to run our systems, just in case the sun hides.



Our ideal scenario is to take LyleXP out and stay where we need to work for long periods of time. It's not about moving every day. We have tremendous patience to sit and wait.



In the one shot of us with the camouflage, we sat for ten to twelve hours a day for the tides to change and the right moment to happen. Having a comfortable safe and warm camper to return to is essential.

Feel free to visit [our website](#) or [follow us at WanderingLyle on Instagram](#).

### **Mauricio and Julia's LyleXP Rig**

Truck: 2016 Ram 3500, diesel, four wheel drive, crew cab, super single rear conversion

Camper: 2022 Supertramp Flagship LT

Gear: XP Camper Tray, Custom Bowen Boxes