

Wood, Field and Stream.

New York Times

By GEORGE GREENFIELD.

2-17-35

William L. Finley, one of America's great camera hunters, sat in his room at the Hotel Pennsylvania the other day and recalled the experiences of thirty years in filming and photographing creatures of the wild.

The eminent naturalist and explorer from Portland, Ore., does not look the part of one whose life has been crowded with adventure, hardship and danger. Rather, this quiet-spoken, bespectacled man, slight of build and a trifle stoop-shouldered, gives the appearance of one who has passed his years in a cloistered study or classroom.

His professorial, studious manner belies his calling, completely masks a venturesome spirit that has carried him to strange and remote places in search of the new, the wonderful and picturesque in bird and animal life.

The inspiration to follow the career of wild-life photographer came to him when, as a student at the University of California in 1901, he cruised the Lewis River in Washington in a canoe and became engrossed in obtaining close-up pictures of sea birds.

A Pioneer in Film Work.

In 1912 he purchased one of the earliest types of motion-picture cameras, a Pathé. In his travels since then he has ranged from Texas to Alaska, and has observed and studied furred and feathered denizens of the Cascade Range, Glacier National Park, Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon and British Columbia.

His present collection of 200,000 feet of film and 60,000 still negatives represents one of the most dramatic pictorial records of this nation's wild life in existence—a record of inestimable value to students of natural history.

Triumphing over almost insurmountable obstacles, he has photographed the shyest and rarest birds and mammals high among the peaks of the Rockies. He has stalked the mountain lions of Arizona and the great Kodiaks of Alaska, and he knows the chilling experience of being charged by an enraged bear.

Mr. Finley smiled wryly as he recalled his encounters with the shaggy brutes.

Tells of Narrow Escape.

"I had three unnerving experiences with bears, but only once was it an actual charge," he related. "On that occasion I was taking pictures of some cubs in Yellowstone, when suddenly the mother emerged from the woods. She headed straight for me at full speed, and I thought my time had come.

"As usual, I was unarmed. It is impractical for a camera-hunter to carry firearms. A revolver or even an ordinary rifle could not stop a charging bear, unless a vital spot were reached, and the odds are all against that. And a wounded animal is the most dangerous kind.

"So when this mother bear came right toward me I simply stood still

and looked straight at her. This was not courage; it was simply a hunch that I would be better off than if I ran. Besides, bears are notorious bluffers, and I was praying that this one would be true to type.

Left That Place Rapidly.

"At any rate, the gods were with me, for Mrs. Bruin stopped suddenly when only eight feet away, hesitated a moment, then turned around and ambled back. Believe me, I certainly did some fancy sprinting then."

On two other occasions, Mr. Finley said, a bear charged in his direction, but for some unaccountable reason swept on past him, only a few feet away. Whatever the reasons were, he did not remain long in the vicinity to analyze them.

The Oregonian has had to resort to many ingenious devices in order to get close-ups. The animal he found most difficult to approach was the mountain goat.

How did he succeed in getting on intimate terms with these daring steeplejacks?

"Well, I dressed in a white cloth costume, equipped with horns, ears and long chin whiskers, tucked the camera against my chest and played goat up on the mountain crags," he explained. "The funny part is that it worked."

Having photographed and studied more than 100 species of birds, Mr. Finley is able to give many interesting sidelights on unusual habits and characteristics of certain varieties.

"For instance, take that paradox of nature, the Wilson's phalarope," he said. "The female does nothing except pay court and lay the eggs. That duty completed, she goes off courting again and leaves to her mate the job of incubating and raising the young.

The Faithless Wren.

"Then there is that parasite, the female cowbird, which never makes a nest. Instead she hunts for a nest of another bird, occupies it just long enough to lay the eggs, and departs permanently. Usually she picks the nest of a smaller bird, like a yellow warbler, presumably because her own young, being larger, will get more of the food.

"Wrens are the most fickle birds, avicets and grosbeaks probably the most loyal. I have watched the parent avicets take turns sitting on the eggs at fifteen-minute intervals, with almost clocklike regularity.

"Another interesting characteristic is that of the mother hummingbird, who, while hatching her brood, never allows her mate to approach the nest, and fights him off if he attempts to do so."

And the keenest of birds, Mr. Finley believes, is the female magpie. "She builds a large, round nest that has no visible opening, and then covers it completely with sharp thorns to thwart unwelcome visitors. How is that for maternal instinct?"

February 21, 1935

Evanston, Ill.

Review

Clubs Present Nature Lecture Free to Public

Dr. William L. Finley, naturalist and lecturer, who is nationally known as a photographer of nature and wild life in their many phases, will present a lecture illustrated with motion pictures Thursday night, Feb. 28, at 8 at the Woman's club auditorium. He will speak under joint auspices of the Evanston Bird club and the Woman's club.

With his lecture, entitled, "Where Rolls the Oregon," he will show five reels of motion pictures made in the beautiful lake country of Oregon. All interested in the program are invited to be the guests of the sponsors for the evening. There will be no charge.

After cruising and exploring from the Gulf of Mexico to the outpost islands of the Bering Sea, Dr. Finley in this lecture has returned to scenes near his own home and has captured in his films something of the romantic story of the country first explored by Lewis and Clark. Included in the pictures are views showing Indians spearing salmon at the falls of the Columbia, coyotes stalking sage hens and pronghorns on the open plateaus, eagles and hawks living pirates' lives among the crags and many other glimpses of wild life.

Studies Wild Animals

Dr. Finley, with his wife, has specialized perhaps more than anyone else in the country in studying and photographing wild creatures. He has lectured a number of times in Evanston, but has not appeared here since 1928.

The Evanston Bird club, which is bringing Dr. Finley to Evanston, is affiliated with the National Association of Audubon societies and has been functioning in Evanston since 1919. It was formed with the hope of arousing an interest in the beauty and value of native wild birds and through educational means to help give them the protection they need. From time to time the club has brought here such outstanding lecturers as Norman McClintock, William Beebe and Alfred M. Bailey.

Mrs. Frederic H. Pattee is president of the club, and other officers are: J. Ralph Wilbur, vice president; Mrs. J. Benton Schaub, secretary and treasurer. Miss Louise Whitehead, Mrs. Arthur H. Knox, Mrs. D. A. Hayes, Miss Myra Barker, Mrs. Maynard D. Howell and Mrs. Clarion DeWitt Hardy are directors.