

Wood, Field and Stream

N.Y. Times By GEORGE GREENFIELD *ap. 24-1937*

William L. Finley, noted wildlife photographer and official of the American Nature Association, loves to talk about beavers. He likes beavers, thinks they are the foremost wildlife citizens.

This column agrees with Bill on most things, because he has the right idea about wildlife and its values. And so we pass along the following letter from him, explaining a few things about the busy beaver:

"Who is to watch the public's interest in our wildlife resources when they are wasted by greed and carelessness? The average citizen hasn't the time, and what is everybody's business is nobody's business.

"To the promoter and exploiter, all our wildlife resources have had but one use, killing for profits of some kind. The conservation history of America reveals many examples of killing the goose that laid the golden egg, the most striking of which is the trappers' campaign against the humble beaver to get quick profits on his hide. It is very much like making a stew out of a productive hen or a roast out of a fine milk cow.

Conservator of Soil and Water

"Nature's engineer, the beaver, has a good warm coat, but his greatest service has been in creating our earliest industry of conserving soil and water. In the West he has proved to be the most valuable wild animal in existence and one that built up a vast amount of wealth.

"As a conservator of soil and water the busy beaver is more logical and toils with a more persistent purpose than man in building dams. Both have the same incentive, to store up water. A beaver dams a stream to create a moat around his house for protection. Man dams a stream to create a reservoir for irrigation and power.

"In this day and age, when Western people are so conscious of dams, the beaver ought to be crowned as our Wild-life Citizen No. 1, because in arid areas he builds reservoirs to save water, without cost, while man is building enormous dams to store up water, but saddling future generations with gigantic debts.

Stopped Rush of Waters

"A long time ago when the great mountain ranges were lifted up from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the rains came and the floods swept down the gullies and canyons, washing the rich top soil to the sea. Then the beavers moved in, building dams along all the little streams, stopping the rush of waters, and the soil settled to the

bottom. Ponds filled up with silt, turning into meadows; more ponds and more soil developed from little to big valleys, getting the whole topography of the country ready for man's arrival and benefit. The water table was built up from its sources.

"Forests were fostered and conserved moisture in the spongelike soil. Innumerable ponds and lakes made homes for fish-life, waterfowl and fur-bearing animals. Streams grew and fed rivers to irrigate the lower stretches of the land.

"The proof today is clear that a beaver's value is in his work and not solely in his hide. The facts have been uncovered in thousands of areas in the West. Beavers were trapped out, ponds and lakes dried up, the water table lowered, and grass-covered valleys reverted to deserts. Soil erosion and dust storms followed which are the tragic pictures of today.

Rôle Played by Beaver

"Throughout the western part of our country the mania for building big dams jumps the popular mind from millions to billions of dollars. Are we not losing our breath in the race? Have we forgotten that it takes hundreds and thousands of small water supplies to create big reservoirs? Have we forgotten that a great dam costing \$200,000,000 will silt up in fifty or a hundred years and be useless unless soil erosion is checked at the headwaters? Have we forgotten nature's use of land and water and her simple methods of creating wealth with no expenditure of money?

"Here is where the beaver comes in. Now, we must admit that he doesn't fit into an irrigated farming community because he cannot look at a ditch without wanting to dam it. He is like a cow that gets into a garden. He shouldn't be killed, but put back where he belongs. In the past when any complaining was made of beavers doing damage, an ignorant Legislature always opened the season. The trappers did the rest.

"Fortunately at the present time a plan has been worked out by the State Game Commissions, the Federal Forest Service and the Biological Survey whereby special live-traps are used to capture these animals where they are not wanted. They are transported alive back to the headwaters of streams in the dryer forested areas. The increase of small storage reservoirs through eastern Oregon is gradually building up a wealth that was once destroyed. All this is the wealth bestowed by nature, and is not burdened with a mortgage.

"Old Man Beaver will always be a gentle, unheralded worker for his own sake."

NOTED EXPLORER TO LECTURE HERE

Oregonian
Apr. 25-37
Oregon Naturalist to Talk at
Benson May 4

The Library association of Portland will present William L. Finley, nationally known Oregon naturalist, author and lecturer, in a free public lecture at Benson Polytechnic high school Tuesday evening, May 4, at 8 o'clock.

Entitled "Woods, Waters and Wild Life," the lecture will feature the outdoor resources of America and the vital problems of conservation. Mr. Finley will illustrate his talk with motion pictures.

For the past 30 years Mr. and Mrs. Finley have cruised and explored many of the bird islands in the Gulf of Mexico, the coast line of British Columbia, the haunts of big game in Alaska, northern glaciers and volcanoes and the outpost islands of Bering sea. They have scaled the snow-capped peaks of Jefferson, Hood and Rainier, and with cameras and notebooks they have packed over the highest passes of the Cascade and Rocky mountain ranges and through most of the national parks.

This lecture by Mr. Finley is one of the library's series of free public lectures given under the terms of the Elizabeth H. Harmon bequest, a special fund for adult education.

Journal - Apr. 25 William L. Finley *37* Will Lecture Here Tuesday, May 4

William L. Finley, Oregon's nationally known naturalist, author and lecturer, will be presented by the Library Association of Portland in a free public lecture, "Woods, Waters and Wild Life," Tuesday, May 4, at 8 p. m. at Benson Tech. His lecture will be illustrated with motion pictures taken on his many travels throughout America and will deal particularly with the outdoor resources of the country and the vital problems of conservation.

In his many seasons of travel and adventure, Finley has taken over 200,000 feet of motion picture film and 50,000 still life negatives, said to be the most remarkable record of American wild animal pictures ever collected. Three large federal wild bird reservations and several state refuges in Oregon stand as a record of Finley's efforts in arousing popular interest in preserving our outdoor resources. After the passage of the federal migratory bird treaty act, Finley was appointed by the secretary of agriculture as one of the first members of the advisory board of this act.

The library is presenting this lecture by Finley under the terms of the Elizabeth H. Harmon bequest, a special fund for adult education.