

Wood, Field and Stream

N.Y. Times - Feb. 9, 1937

BY GEORGE GREENFIELD

William L. Finley, field naturalist of the American Nature Association and a noted wildlife photographer, was chatting the other day about the excitement and hazards of taking close-up pictures of wild creatures. He had been discussing the Wood, Field and Stream Snapshot Contest, in which Mr. Finley will be one of the judges, and the talk veered around to camera hunting.

"Hunting wildlife with a gun is mighty tame compared to shooting with a shutter," said Mr. Finley. "No one realizes how tough the camera game is until he has tried it. 'I've shot with both camera and gun, and I know."

The Oregonian said he began "shooting with a shutter" forty years ago. Since that time he and Mrs. Finley, who has been both companion and co-worker on his photographic explorations, have camped, cruised and motored from the coast of Mexico to the Bering Sea and the wilderness areas of Alaska.

"Getting Personal" With Animals

Bill describes his work as "getting personal with wild animals." Sometimes it has been too personal for comfort.

"I've seen eye to eye with mountain lions and touched noses with bears, so to speak," he remarked dryly. "And it wasn't always conducive to peace of mind. In fact, on such occasions you get to understand the old saying about 'distance lends enchantments.'"

One of the earliest adventures that came nearest ending the budding Finley career occurred in the Summer of 1906, when he cruised out to St. Clemente Island beyond Catalina off the Southern coast. He wanted a snapshot of bald eagles in their nest on a rocky crag, but he slipped on the cliffs and suffered a broken jaw. A heavy storm was gathering at sea, so it was an all-night and all-day cruise in a small launch in search of medical help. Two days after the fall he landed in a Los Angeles hospital.

A few years later he got even with the eagles, making a life series of photographs, from egg to full feather. And no slips.

Cubs, Honey—and Mother

"A camera man gets plenty of thrills if he is after close-ups of big game," Finley commented. "About twenty years ago I was filming some bears in the Yellowstone country. Two bear cubs were lapping some honey out of a can and I was kneeling about fifteen feet away, shooting for action.

"Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, I caught a movement in the brush and the big mother bear emerged from a clump, some sixty feet away. The instant the old lady saw the strayed around her cubs, she let out a couple of urgent woofs and came plunging in my direction like a racehorse.

"Have you ever had a bear, an angry bear, rush at you?" asked Finley, glaring at us with a stony expression. It was admitted that this delightful experience was something to which we were still looking forward, more or less.

Stops Eight Feet Away

"Well," said Bill, lifting the suspense, "that old she bear was in a hurry and no mistake. I was set the wrong way to run and couldn't compete with such speed, anyway. There was nothing to do but face Mama Bear and take my medicine. And pray.

"She lunged up to within eight feet of me and—miracle! suddenly

SNAPSHOT CONTEST RULES

The Wood, Field and Stream Snapshot Contest offers a \$100 grand prize and fifty honorable mention prizes of \$5 each for the best photographs of outdoor life (except athletic contests and games) taken by amateurs. Open to amateurs anywhere. Deadline for mailing entries — midnight, this Friday.

The contest is sponsored by THE NEW YORK TIMES Wide World Photos, Inc., and the National Sportsmen's Show. The fifty-one prize winners and the best of the others (which will be awarded gold seals and ribbons) will be displayed in a special salon at the show in Grand Central Palace Feb. 18-27.

Contestants assume all risks and release sponsors from all responsibility or liability. No pictures to be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. Advisable to place stiff cardboard in envelope to protect photos. No limit on number of pictures you may enter, but only one prize to an individual.

Send entries to Snapshot Contest, THE NEW YORK TIMES Wide World Photos, Inc., Times Square, New York.

stopped. If the ground had been slippery she probably would have skidded and we would have touched noses, but against my will! Anyway, we stared at each other for a few moments that seemed hours to me, and then she slowly turned and went back to the cubs. I did not turn slowly—and I went the other way.

"Some naturalists have claimed the black bear is a great bluffer, which may be true. But in the case of a mother and cubs, my advise is not to call any bluffs. On this particular occasion I have always felt that if I had retreated, I would have been caught in two jumps, and my fear would have encouraged the bear to mop up the ground with me."

The Kodiak bear of Alaska, according to Finley, is the largest carnivorous animal in the world and has what may be conservatively called an aggressive disposition. His most exciting experience in camera hunting involved a giant Kodiak.

"These bears are afraid of man and will retreat," he said, "but oftentimes they charge at sight, especially if bothered when fishing for salmon or while with cubs. They have killed a number of hunters.

Guide Repels Charge

"One day I was photographing a bear catching salmon, when it suddenly turned and charged at me. Mr. guide, Hasselborg, a famous Alaskan outdoor man, was with me for just such a contingency. The ordinary hunter would have been too scared even to shoot, but Hasselborg held his gun in his right hand, finger on trigger, swung his hat at the approaching beast and yelled: 'Keep back there, you blasted old fool.' You may not believe it, but the brute pulled up short when thirty feet away and turned back.

"When I caught my breath, I asked Hasselborg why he didn't shoot. He said he wanted me to get some good pictures and he figured he could scare the animal."

FISH AND GAME GROUP

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TO MEET SATURDAY
Boston Herald

The Massachusetts Fish and Game Association will hold its ninth annual New England game conference Saturday at 10 A. M. at the Hotel Statler. Judge Albert L. Saunders will be the chairman. Daniel Merriam, Dr. Paul D. Dalke of Connecticut and Dr. Gardiner Bump of New York will be the speakers.

William L. Finley of Oregon will give a talk with moving pictures on "Birds, Bergs and Kodiak Bears" in the evening.