

Wyman Meinzer – S1E6 English F.mp3

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:00:23] Hello and welcome to a Talk on the Wild Side, your biweekly tour of all things wild in Texas. I'm your host, Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:00:33] And I am your co-host, not a doctor, Rebecca Zerlin.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:00:37] Well, we have some really interesting stories in this episode from a world renowned wildlife and landscape photographer, Wyman Meinzer. He's a quintessential Texan with a fantastic gift for photography.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:00:51] Right. Many of our listeners might be familiar with Wyman's photography, but he's also a pretty good storyteller, which you'll hear coming up in our interview in just a bit. But first, let's get to our What's Wild and new segment today. So, Andrew, what's wild and new right now?

Andrew Lowery [00:01:09] Howdy. Howdy. So, yeah, this is really interesting. I think most of us are aware that there are a lot of fish and other marine species that can create a chemical reaction within their bodies that makes them glow in the dark. This is called bioluminescence. Well, researchers have recently discovered that some mammals have a similar phenomenon called bio fluorescence that makes them glow under UV light.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:01:33] Really, which mammals do this?

Andrew Lowery [00:01:36] This was previously known in opossums and flying squirrels, but it was recently rediscovered accidentally in the platypus. Since this new discovery, other species, mainly from Australia, have also been investigated and bio fluorescence has been documented in a wombat species, a bilby species and Tasmanian devils. These animals aren't glowing through a chemical process, as in bioluminescence. They're absorbing light through proteins in their skin or other tissues and then reemitting it as a different color.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:02:05] So why would animals do this?

Andrew Lowery [00:02:08] Well, it's a good question, and the answer to that isn't really clear, but most of these animals are nocturnal or crepuscular, so it may be linked to nightlife or just communication or sexual selection.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:02:20] Oh, I'm I'm feeling a definition time coming on... (Laughter).

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:02:25] Definition time! (Laughter).

Rebecca Zerlin [00:02:25] Definition time...Crepuscular just means an animal is active at dusk or dawn.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:02:32] Good! So this is really interesting, because it makes me wonder, what Texas species might be bio fluorescent and wouldn't that be fun to study?

Rebecca Zerlin [00:02:44] Yes, I...I'm bored of my project right now. (Laughter) Can I change?

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:02:52] Oh, my gosh. I think you have enough going on. (Laughter) But anyway, it would be it would be fun to do. Yeah. So now it's time for Rebecca to break it down as an introduction to today's guest expert. And here's Becca's Breakdown.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:03:08] If you listen to some of our other episodes, you probably notice that we talked to a lot of really awesome scientists and researchers. And that makes sense, since that's kind of the point of this show. Most of our guests so far have extensive backgrounds in different conservation related sciences. And we've not only learned a lot about their jobs, but the research they're doing as well. Now, I'm gonna be honest with you here...while there's some really cool things happening in the scientific world, sometimes it's not always explained in the easiest way for everyone to understand. There have been many classes and talks where I've had absolutely no idea what's going on because, things just weren't explained in a way that I can understand them. I think we all know I'm talking about math. So what do we do about all this technical boring "sciencey" wording? How do we tell people who may not have super scientific backgrounds about what we're finding? Well, like many failed relationships, it's all about communication, baby! We all have skills that can be used to catch others attention and teach them about what we understand. We can write articles, take photos, or maybe host a super fun podcast that shares cool science information that you share with all of your friends. Nudge, nudge, wink, wink! But photos and writing, that's not quite scientific, right? Those are more Artspaced, aren't they? They don't necessarily have to be mutually exclusive. Poser, Tim Minchin, said it perfectly when he gave a commencement speech at the University of Western Australia, back in 2013. Please don't make the mistake of thinking the arts and sciences are at odds with one another. That is a recent, stupid, and damaging idea. You don't have to be unscientific to make beautiful art, to write beautiful things. While there's careers as wildlife biologists, land managers, game wardens, researchers and so on, there's also a huge need for writers, photographers and artists of all kinds in conservation. While there's careers as wildlife biologist, land managers, game wardens, researchers and so on. There's also a huge need for writers, photographers and artists of all kinds and conservation. Just like our guest today, who's an artist with a scientist understanding and education, he's created a world renowned career for himself by combining his passion for wild places and animals with his photography skills. So, sit tight and get focused for today's interview.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:05:50] We're here with Wyman Meinzer today! Weiman, is the Texas State Photographer and thank you so much for being with us, Weiman.

Wyman Meinzer [00:05:58] It's a pleasure! My pleasure.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:06:00] Would you mind just telling us a little bit about your background, like growing up? Did you grow up on a ranch? And and how did you become interested in photography along the way?

Wyman Meinzer [00:06:10] Well, I did I did grow up on a ranch here and Knox County. My dad was a foreman on twenty seven thousand ranch. The old Leed's ranch is pretty well...disected Now, you know, typical of the times. And and I even as a little boy, I had an interest in photography and my mother asked my mom for a camera. She had an old...I believe a Kodak Duaflex something like that. It's a 120. And she gave that to me and I'd carry it in my saddlebags. But I became disillusioned, because I couldn't focus close. I love moving in tight on things. And so I lost interest in photography. Basically, I had...you know, I would shoot every once-in-a-while, but I just needed to get close and I couldn't; so, I just didn't I didn't continue the real level of interest that I initially started with, until I got into

Texas Tech and I was involved in research on coyote dietary habits. And Dr. Eckert told me he told me that I needed to document some of my data and he loaned me an old (inaudible) RF3, or something like that. I have one in here in my collection. And he said, go down and get some Kodachrome out of the and the wildlife lab and just take the camera. You and they started really becoming interested because I focused close and camera was small and manageable. And that's kind of how I got to actually develop a serious interest in photography.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:07:53] Then you...So, you got a bachelor's degree from Texas Tech, right?

Wyman Meinzer [00:07:55] Right. Yeah.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:07:58] In Range and Wildlife Management? And then after that, did you decide to go into to photography, professionally?

Wyman Meinzer [00:08:05] Yeah. I'll tell you what, I took... Of course, when I graduated, my main interest was to go and trap coyotes. I just felt like that I needed to get away. I've been going to school it seemed like all my life, and I needed to just chill out and take a rest. And so, I moved out into a little half dug-out on the Pitchfork Ranch and I lived there for three winters. And all I did was trap coyotes and I took photographs. I bought, you know, a higher level camera, a Cannon F1...was the best one at the time. And bought a big lens, a Floright 500 lens, a Cannon lens. And...and...then I tell you, I trapped in 1974 and 1975...and then in 1975, I decided to take a possible attempt at maybe working for the Forest Department, so I moved to Los Lost...I mean, Santa Fe, New Mexico and lived there were just a couple of weeks before they moved me to Las Vegas, New Mexico. And I realized very quickly that that the Forest Department, the Forestry Service, Forest Service was not my cup of tea.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:09:30] Yeah! (Laughter).

Wyman Meinzer [00:09:30] And so I headed on back to Texas. And I remember stopping as I crossed the line and got out and kissed the ground. (Laughter) And then moved back into my dugout. And I lived there for the next two winters, and trapped...Yeah. And then I then I actually...I sat for like three or four more years, but I was I was living here at home, I got married 77'. And so, and then I was a research associate at Texas Tech. We had a big coyote research program, it was on bait, the study of various scents, you know, that the coyotes will react to...various odors. And so it was so big for such a large project that a graduate student couldn't handle it and classes. And so they asked me to be a graduate...I mean, a research associate for two-and-a-half years. And so I did that. At the same time, working on my photography, in fact, that was one of the stipulations was that somebody like at various times of the winter would come and run my transacts while I went for a week and photographed. And they agreed to do that. And so that that led me on up into the middle are the you know, around eighty three, eighty four. And that's when I really broke into the magazine market. And I realized that there really was...you know, there was a possibility that I could do this, on a large scale.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:11:12] Yeah. What was your first magazine layout or cover or what?

Wyman Meinzer [00:11:15] Well, my first actually my first magazine layout or it might have been a back cover...no, it was a it was an inside shot of a Mississippi coyote in Parks and

Wildlife. And it was like the lead shot in the story. But almost simultaneously, I had the...I had a shot in National Wildlife with a roadrunner holding a American collared lizard in its beak. And then after that, I had met Dave Baxter, at Parks and Wildlife in Lubbock one day. I just happened to be there, and saw him, and he introduced himself and we became friends. He said, you need to start submitting to Parks and Wildlife. And I did. And then I started getting a lot of cover shots for those guys. Yeah. And and at the same...and then in 1981, I broke into Field and Stream...actually actually in 1980 or 1981, I had three national covers in one month and Sports & Field, American Hunter, and Peterson's Hunting, all in one month. And I knew then that that I had set a brand. Because, I remember an editor in New York telling me, he said, yeah, yeah, I'm getting calls from the all these photographers around America, and they ask who this guy in Texas giving me all these great wild turkey pictures. (Laughter).

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:12:46] That's awesome. That's awesome. In the late 1990s, Governor Bush, when George W. was governor, he named you the Texas State Photographer. And I think you're I think we're the only state that has a state photographer. Is that right?

Wyman Meinzer [00:13:02] You know what I'm not aware of it? I don't know. I don't know. But I do remember it well, because I didn't know that the...that the House was working on that. There were there were there were a couple of state representatives and maybe a senator working on it. And then all of a sudden I got a call one day, that could be in Austin like like the next day? And I said, well, I guess, but why? And they say, well, you've been named the State Photographer of Texas in a way that we need to address that on the House floor. And so, yeah I went, and I remember I change clothes out in the parking lot. They said you can't wear your boots. (Laughter) So you need to...you need to wear some shoes and a dress coat. So I changed out the parking lot of the Capitol building and walked in and went into the House chambers there and and was sworn in as the official State Photographer of Texas. And then there I came out and went to Governor Bush's office, and that's when he came out and...and shook my hand and, you know, we we. We got er' done!

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:14:16] That's cool, that's pretty exciting!

Wyman Meinzer [00:14:20] Yeah, it is! It is! I'll tell ya something else! Oh, my goodness...after that, this is sort of a off the trail, little story, but what was fascinating about it was that I had met governor Bush, I think, at a party...in Austin, and then whenever he came walking out to shake my hand, he had never seen me except in my boots and jeans. And he shook my hand and he said, I didn't even think you owned the suit. (Laughter) I'll never forget that.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:15:08] (Laughter) He's a funny guy. He's got lots of good one-liners.

Wyman Meinzer [00:15:11] He does things that quirky. Yeah, he got it. He's got some real, real clever sayings. I can tell you that. I've spent a lot of time around him.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:15:21] Oh, really? Yeah. He's he's very down to earth, too.

Wyman Meinzer [00:15:26] He is. I've been asked to do some shoots for he and Mrs. Bush, out there on their ranch in Crawford two or three times. And so we spent a lot of time with.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:15:37] That's nice.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:15:39] What are your official duties as the Texas State Photographer?

Wyman Meinzer [00:15:43] You know what? It's not...there's not an official duty, it's just the name. But but I know why, I think I know why that they did that is because. Because a lot of photographers tend to focus on one thing, their landscape photographers, that are portrait photographers, they're sports photographers. But I have done all of it. And so and so I I think probably a lot of that title. Was the consideration of winning that title was that was that I represented Texas on all levels, you know, from sky, to landscape, to wildlife, to people, sports, everything...I've shot football games...you know, I've shot everything. Historically, you know, I received the John Ben Sheppard award for for some of my historical work on some history in Texas. And so, anyway, it's a I think it's an all encompassing thing that I do that represents Texas, and that's the reason that I was named that. But as far as any official duties, it's not. But it is certainly a very big plus when it comes to doing things.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:17:11] Sure.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:17:11] Are you sent on assignments or how do how do you decide? All right...

Wyman Meinzer [00:17:15] You know, I was only really only thing I do now...well, I used to do a lot of magazines asignments. You know, I've got I've gone to the Yukon Territory and shot for Sports & Field, and Mazatlán Mexico for Field and Stream, and been all around... But Magnes don't do that anymore. I don't even shoot for magazines anymore. Except except if they specifically call me and ask me to do something, I don't even submit to magazines anymore. And so books, right now, of course, I do a lot of real estate photography on ranches because I, my wife and I are real estate agents under Charles Milton and Sun in Lubbock; who are the largest, I guess they are the largest brokerage firm for ranches in America. At least they have more land than anybody. And so I do a lot of landscape photography for my my fellow agents, as well as mine and Sylinda's property. And and then, of course, I still go down to the East Foundation and I do a lot of photography for them, because I like to keep them up to date on anything they might need for their newsletters and other publications. I love I love dearly love that foundation!

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:18:37] Yeah, they're terrific!

Wyman Meinzer [00:18:39] Oh, and Neil Wilkinson and that group...go-lee...they're just, they're my heroes!

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:18:45] Yes. They're doing so much good work!

Wyman Meinzer [00:18:48] I'm telling you, I was on the phone this morning texting Neil with a bunch of stories that's been occurring lately, and we chatted back and forth to...even today.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:19:01] Yeah. That's great. So speaking of stories, what's the hardest you've ever worked for a photograph? Is there a photograph that just took you forever to take?

Wyman Meinzer [00:19:11] Well, hmm. As far as one photograph is probably a collective thing, probably of all encompassing, like an article. I think probably the toughest. The most suffering I ever endured, and I don't want to ever do it again, is that I did that...stone sheep story for the...in the Yukon, for Sports Field Magazine. I spent three weeks in the Yukon. And that was...I was thirty six years old, and I have never endured that much hardship in my life.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:19:50] Really?

Wyman Meinzer [00:19:51] Yes! I say I never was a big backpacker. And when I got up there, the guide asked me...first, he flew me over Rose Mountain. That's where Jack O'Connor used to do his stone sheep hunting. And he said, that's where you're going to be, and those are the cliffs you're going to have to climb.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:20:08] Oh my gosh!

Wyman Meinzer [00:20:09] And yeah, I was 36 years old. You know, that time of life and feeling spunky and a little sassy. (Laughter) And so I thought, oh, yeah, that's fine, I can do it! (Laughter) So it was...lets see...one...two...three, four, five of us. And so, I know that the guide, or one of the outfitters, came up to me and he said, let me feel your pack, and he picked it up and he said, have you ever backbacked before? And I said, nope! He said, this is too heavy. And I said, oh I have to have all this camera equipement... Yeah...B.S! (Laughter) I didn't need that 300/2.8 (type of lens). I was told that thing for 50 bucks going up that mountain! (Laughter) But it took us 16 hours to climb that mountain.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:20:59] Oh, my Gosh!!!

Wyman Meinzer [00:21:00] 16 hours to climb that mountain! And my pack was...weighed over 50 pounds.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:21:05] Oh, wow.

Wyman Meinzer [00:21:07] And, you know, at the time, I probably weighed 160; so I had nearly a third of my weight in my back, and after nine days on top of that mountain climbing up and down rock slides, down snow-shoots, I guarantee you I was in the best shape of my life!

Rebecca Zerlin [00:21:26] I bet!

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:21:28] Wow!

Wyman Meinzer [00:21:30] I mean, that was that was that was tough. That real tough!

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:21:34] Really! And you guys were just like camping and living there on the mountain while you were doing that?

Wyman Meinzer [00:21:38] Yeah, we're living in tents. had two tents and had a pack dog. They packed up our salt and our O'Henry candy bars, of which I've never eat one since...

(Laughter) That was in 1987. And I've also I've never eaten freeze-dried dinner. Because I swore when that first hunter killed a sheep, I said, when the first sheep goes down, I will never, never open another Freeze-Dried dinner. And I have not...and that was in 1987. (Laughter).

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:22:11] Gotta stick by your word! (Laughter).

Wyman Meinzer [00:22:12] I stick by my word. (Laughter).

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:22:15] That's right. So you earned every one of those photos, hu?

Wyman Meinzer [00:22:19] Every one of them! Yeah. I was published in Sports & Field shortly thereafter, I think called the Yukon Adventure.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:22:25] That's great! I'm going to have to look that up. I want to see those photographs.

Wyman Meinzer [00:22:29] Yeah, it was in 1988. I believe they published in nineteen eighty eight. I was up there in eighty seven and shot it...and I remember vividly, it frosted on August the 10th. Yes, it frosted and thank God it did, because it got the mosquitoes.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:22:49] Oh, yes! (Laughter).

Wyman Meinzer [00:22:50] I have never, in my life, never endured the mosquitoes that I endured in the Yukon. Never, ever. We at that time, you could get 100 percent DEET, which I don't think you can get that anymore because it virtually burn your skin. And every 30 minutes we had to put a fresh layer of a 100 percent DEET on to keep the mosquitoes off... Yeah...it was bad!

Rebecca Zerlin [00:23:21] How many rolls of film would you say you went through on that trip or just a trip like that?

Wyman Meinzer [00:23:25] Yeah, I went through, let's say, about fifty five.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:23:29] Wow!

Wyman Meinzer [00:23:30] I think about fifty five rolls. Yeah, I got up on that mountain and and I realized I didn't have an extra battery for my camera. And so I had to nurse that battery for nine days and it rained, sleeted, it blew...every conceivable weather condition in late...or early August that you could imagine happened. On top of that mountain.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:23:56] Not your typical Texas August, hu?

Wyman Meinzer [00:23:58] No, it was it was absolutely abysmal.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:24:03] It sounds like it. (Laughter).

Wyman Meinzer [00:24:05] Yeah, I mean, I tell my wife this day we were watch some movie, and this guy was sitting there and I believe it might have been a World War II documentary or something, and it was raining straight down and water was pouring off his helmet. The guy was so dejected. And I said, that's kind of the way I felt in the Yukon,

because we were setting...we had we had going on a on a ridge to go to the west side of the mountain, and it became so knife-edge that the dogs could not traverse that that knife edge ridge. And so, in fact, one of them fell, and and slid down into an ice sheet and one of the guides had to go in and retrieve the dog.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:24:46] Oh, no.

Wyman Meinzer [00:24:48] And so we had to descend like a thousand feet. Down a rockslide and then go across the mountain slope and then and then climb back up a thousand feet to resume our journey. And it started raining, started a downpour. And I remember sitting on a rock with my head down, I had my hat on, and water was pouring off my hat. My boots were full of water. My cameras were wet. And I was sitting there thinking, if I ever get out of this godforsaken place, I'll never come back. (Laughter). It was horrible!

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:25:26] Oh, my gosh, OK. I really need to find those photographs now.

Wyman Meinzer [00:25:32] (Laughter) Oh, we look happy in the pictures. (Laughter) You know, we all were satisfied. You can't see the misery! (Laughter).

Rebecca Zerlin [00:25:41] We'll look real close.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:25:43] OK, so let's come back to Texas now. You've worked all over the state. Yes. What's your favorite place? Do you have a favorite place to photograph?

Wyman Meinzer [00:25:55] Yeah, I like to plains. I mean, when you get right down to it, you know, I was born and raised here, and so I'm kind of a plains guy. But each each region in the state is very special. And at certain times of the year, you know, I mean, I'm not a I'm not a big timber man. Yeah, but there's times of year. I love East Texas, along the Natus and the Angelena. I was down there recently shooting some images of Angelena.and just gorgeous country.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:26:23] It is!

Wyman Meinzer [00:26:25] Yeah, it really is. And I like to see a little bit more sky. But then then you go down to South Texas in say December and or even October. And I love that country down there. And then you go out to the far west Texas, if you get rain, that's a big if...and you go there about October. And I guarantee that that old West Texas Big Bend country is absolutely phenomenal.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:26:53] It is, isn't it? I love Big Bend.

Wyman Meinzer [00:26:56] Yes, it is. Especially when you're when you're getting in the monsoonal flows. I love going down there trying to get flash floods. With my drone. And and then, of course, early November. Golly, you can't beat the planes. You go up on the Canadian and you've got this gorgeous cottonwood trees turning. You know, every place has it has its seasons. And I love being...but but if you if you said, man, you can't go anywhere but one...I mean, I got to stay in Plains. I'd have to side with the plains.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:27:31] Yeah, Yeah, I'm with you. I'm with you. The planes are really beautiful. I really enjoyed my time there.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:27:37] Yeah. So is there a photo you have in mind of a specific animal or landscape that you want to take but just haven't had the chance to take yet?

Wyman Meinzer [00:27:47] Oh, you know, something that forever fascinates me. And I just can't get it out of my mind, and I've seen it several times, but not on a huge scale. It's not necessarily an animal, I mean, I've pretty well covered all the animals. Well, I would like to photograph...not using a trail camera, I would like to call up with my predator call, and photograph an ocelot.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:28:15] That would be awesome! Would'nt it?!?

Wyman Meinzer [00:28:17] I have tried down on the on the Alsaces...I keep I keep telling Niel, I say, I'm going to do one of these days. And every time I get out into that good ocelot country, I call up a bobcat.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:28:27] Yeah!? (Laughter).

Wyman Meinzer [00:28:29] I mean, every time I go down there and you crawl into that impenetrable brush, you get on all fours...and you crawl in there with the ticks and the mosquitoes, in there and you start calling and invariably here comes a big, long legged bobcat. And I'm just going...god...one of these days...surely an Ocelots going to come in.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:28:51] Yeah, well, you're right. I mean, they're right in there together, which which I find fascinating. But maybe the maybe the ocelots are there and you haven't seen them. I mean, you just don't you ever think maybe there's one just right here and I just can't see it yet, you know? Watching you?

Wyman Meinzer [00:29:09] Oh, I'll tell you...I've been calling before, like one instance. I was calling one day. And, you know, after 55 years of calling, my eyes are accustomed to unusual activity, you know, an instantaneous click or just a flick of a tail or an ear. You know, at one hundred yards. And I go, wait a minute. That wasn't there a while ago. I'm sorry for these trucks, but I'm out on the...

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:29:40] That's alright! We didn't even hear them.

Wyman Meinzer [00:29:41] OK, but then he was calling and I saw just this parit this movement out of my peripheral vision. And and I kept staring and it was over six steps in front of me. I kept staring and thinking something is in that bush. And and finally I could make out one eye, and one ear of a bobcat. And what, you couldn't have been over ten steps away. And he never moved a muscle. He never bat an eye. And so, Sylinda and I was sitting there and we were sitting there whispering, you know, and I was I was having to manual focus on his eye because AutoFocus wouldn't wouldn't get through the brush...and and he just quietly, silently backed up and disappeared. Never even saw him leave other than just backing up. So I know there's been some out there, probably been close, but I just I just couldn't detect them because that you guys know you've been to Alsace. So, I mean, that's the impenetrable stuff where those ocelots live.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:30:50] It is crazy thick! You got to crawl on your belly.

Wyman Meinzer [00:30:52] Yeah. And it's just, you know, I'd love to get more. God, it would be so cool. But but what I'm really fascinated in is photographing flash floods.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:31:06] Really?!?

Wyman Meinzer [00:31:06] I have this fascination with flash floods that just that just eats me up. Every time I see a thunderstorm come in at the shaft of rain. Oh, I go somewhere. That rain is falling on an aurora and there will be a flash flood, and I wish I could be there. I caught it one time really well one time really well, in the big bend, but not a huge three foot wall, but they generally don't occur like that. They usually occur like like maybe five or six inches deep and they just gurgle and, you know, and rumble over the rocks. And then within seconds, they're over your boots, up to your knees and then by god... You better get out of there because then they're going over your head.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:31:53] Really? That's scary, too. (Laughter).

Wyman Meinzer [00:31:53] But yeah, I was watching a storm. A friend of mine and I were watching a storm over Bear Macer Bear Rogier Bear Canyon, which is adjacent there, and people Okri. And I said, man, that's got to be on this people to create the headwaters. And so we got into Polaris and went up the creek all the way to the fence line and killed the engine. And I could hear something. It sounded like wind. But I looked at the cottonwood trees and there were no leaves moving, as did that water coming, let's get out of here. And so we turned and scurried back and climbed up on higher ground. And I launched my drone. And sure enough, and when I came over the cliff, there came the headwaters of this this flood coming down. And it was incredible. Yeah, just a dry ground, not a pool of water in front of you, and then just water boiling and coming down and crashing through the rocks. It was beautiful.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:32:58] So, you're also into storm chasing, I take it?

Wyman Meinzer [00:33:02] I'm not in to storm chasing at all. (Laughter) I like, I like clouds, I like cloud formations. I like light. But as far as chasing tornadoes, I have no desire just at all, you know, because when you get close to a tornado, you're going to get hailed on, that's a given. And my insurance is high enough as it is. (Laughter).

Rebecca Zerlin [00:33:25] And so you mentioned predators. So predators have been a favorite subject of yours over the years.

Wyman Meinzer [00:33:31] Yes!

Rebecca Zerlin [00:33:31] Do you have a favorite animal species that you enjoy photographing?

Wyman Meinzer [00:33:37] Yeah, yeah. I love photographing coyotes. Because, I mean, I just can't...they are so. I don't know, they've got such personality. You can, when when they come in, I mean, each one of them is just they're just different, different breeds of a cat there. I mean, they just come trotting and they come running and they come stalking in, and they may stand there and let you photograph them. They may break and run, throw rocks at you, you know, as a fly by you. But they are so interesting and they have such intelligent eyes. Their eyes are just so just I mean, they're so hypnotic. And when you get a big say, a seven or eight year old coyote come in and he's really zoned in on you. I mean, that's very just that really captivates me. I just can't get it. I mean, I love calling. I like to have called about 56 years now. And starting when I was 14. And and hell, I like to call as much now that even as a kid, I make all my phone calls. In fact, I just start I just mentioned

to Neil this morning, I started a brand new series of calls. I've made a whole collection, personal collection, I think there's probably maybe 40 calls in this is carrying case I have. They're made out of various woods from ebony wood, to mesquite, to both Bo dark wood, and just gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous calls.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:35:14] Do you sell them or are they just for you for fun?

Wyman Meinzer [00:35:16] I do. That's my personal collection. But yeah, I have several people. In fact, I had one guy make nine calls for around Christmas last year.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:35:26] Man of many skills.

Wyman Meinzer [00:35:28] Yeah I, I like yeah. I get bored doing one thing I like. I love to fly to fly drones. I love photography. I love working with my hands, with wood, in fact, the other day and I had a real incident...I was I was flashing this beautiful rootstock from a mesquite on a tablesaw. So and and so I'm I'm very aware of the dangers of saws. I'm sure, you know, the radial saws are just terribly dangerous. But, you know, if you keep a handle on the table saw, you know, you pretty well got to tell until you put a small piece wood in, and that's what I had. It probably will probably wait a pound. And I got about halfway through that thing, but it was at an angle and all of a sudden something pop and I instinctively jerked my head to keep my eyes protected, and it threw that wood into my stomach.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:36:25] Oh, no!

Wyman Meinzer [00:36:26] And it hit so hard that it knocked the breath out me.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:36:30] Oh, my gosh!

Wyman Meinzer [00:36:31] And and I thought that it actually penetrated my guts. And I was and I was afraid to reach down there, afraid I was going to pick up my guts. Uh huh. Oh, wow. And so I turned and I spin over and trying to get my breath and I went, oh, my God, this thing has gutted me! I'm I got to get the house! And I looked down and it was already turning purple. And I had and now I've got this huge yellow and and dark purple mark around my belly button was right to the right of it. And then and then at this these red looks like turkey tracks where that board hit me so hard it almost cut into me.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:37:14] Wow, that's just really painful.

Wyman Meinzer [00:37:18] Yeah, it's it's bad. It was terrible. I mean, I really thought I'd gutted myself.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:37:24] Oh gosh.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:37:25] lets uh...change the subject now! (Laughter) We are all cringing here!

Wyman Meinzer [00:37:32] Well, I like to do a lot of different things a lot.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:37:34] Yeah, that's that's nice.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:37:36] What advice would you give to an aspiring photographer of wildlife and landscapes?

Wyman Meinzer [00:37:42] Keep it real.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:37:45] Good advice!

Wyman Meinzer [00:37:46] Keep it real.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:37:47] OK.

Wyman Meinzer [00:37:47] You know, it's I see all of this. You know, back when I started, we used Kodachrome 64, Kodachrome 25. Then we got lucky and got some Kodachrome 100...200. But we maxed out there. And then Velvia came in and and the chromes were really difficult to shoot. You had to be right on the money with your exposures for them to for your images to really come out correct. And now with digital, you can, you can really really...embellish a photograph to where it's not even real. And too many people are doing that today. You know, when you shoot raw, when you shoot JPEG, it's going to come out pretty well like you saw it. But if you shoot raw and that's all, I shoot it raw. It's going to come out flat some other time out exactly the way you saw it. The light is not going to be exactly right. And so you have to go in and you have to do OK, this is the way this is what it looks like. But too many people go in and just blow the thing out of proportion and just go. I can look at one instantly. I go, come on, now, you know, get off the controls there. You know, get out of the photoshop or lightroom, you know, let's get real with you. But but just just be real and, you know, go out and do your stuff. And when you get on there, too, if you shooting raw and you and you go in and try to get what you saw, make it the way you saw it. Right. Because, I mean, people are starting to complain about it. And a lot of other photographers, like, this is just kind of getting out of hand! And I don't even I don't even judge photo contest anymore because people are going crazy with it.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:39:33] Really?

Wyman Meinzer [00:39:34] Oh, yeah. Yeah. Especially especially your your your your skys. The people just just go out and just go beyond the realm of reality. And so but to when I got into it in the 70s, late 70s, through the 80s, I mean, those were the golden years of freelance photography, especially editorial work, man. I mean, it was like you could call I could call Field & Stream, Outdoor Life, say, hey, guys, I've got an idea for an article. And they would say, great, we'll buy a plane ticket to Alaska and just give us first dibs if your images. And and that kind of a deal. You can't do that anymore. It's just man...And back then minimum for a photograph, the size of your thumb is 500 bucks. And now the magazines have converged. You know, they've all gone under one roof and they don't they don't they don't pay worth a flip. And they they ask for the impossible and they pay minimal.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:40:41] Yeah.

Wyman Meinzer [00:40:44] And so I'm just going, OK, you know, I'm out of here. I'm just I'm just not I make the last. Last time I really shot big was in the 90s, I got three covers in one year on one Field & Stream and Field Stream I got three covers one year. And I was known at the time because I talked to a photographer one day, Tom O'leary. Oh, bless his heart, he passed away. I don't know, two or three years ago of some sort of leukemia, I believe he was a really good photographer out of Montana, a good friend of mine, and he

came through probably...I bet it wasn't over three weeks before he passed away just to say hello and was in perfect health, it appeared. But he told me one time, he said, you're known as a big shooter. And I said, well, what's that? And they said, you shoot a lot of cover stuff. He says the rest of us shoot a lot of of, you know, article, inside stuff, you know, that that go along with an article. But he said, big shooters are cover shooters. And so that was a very nice compliment from from a guy who whom I really respect.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:42:02] That is a nice compliment. But that's good advice, though, to keep it real in nature, so spectacular, so we don't have to monkey with it.

Wyman Meinzer [00:42:11] That's right. And, you know, if you go and if I think I've posted it on one or two months, maybe one of my Facebook may be far back there. There's a there's a photograph of a patternless Diamondback. Very rare rattlesnake. And they've only only been a handful of them ever seen. And and not three of them have been captured over in a county adjacent to us. It's kind of weird. And then one up in Kansas and actually one down near San Antonio. But my brother found one one time and then another friend, another guy I knew found one. And I photographed him. And there's a shot in there that that rattlesnake. And he is...all it is, is of his head that looks like he's trying to come into the lens. And that is exactly what that snake looks like. He's not embellished one iota. And that's what you need to keep.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:43:14] One last question for you. We're asking her we're asking everybody to share fun, what we call Biology blunders. You've probably spent more time working outside than anybody I know. And you've told us about the Yukon. But...

Wyman Meinzer [00:43:27] Yeah! ha ha!

Rebecca Zerlin [00:43:29] Do you have any fun? Biology blunders were something just didn't go as planned?

Wyman Meinzer [00:43:34] Damn right. Yeah, I was photographing the Mojave rattler one day.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:43:42] Oh no!

Wyman Meinzer [00:43:43] And actually it happened twice...but that this one time really spooked me. And I've done a lot of rattlesnake work here. I mean a ton of rattlesnake work. I just...They're a fascinating species. I don't kill them. I don't bother them at all. And so anyway, I was in the big band and I was photographing the Mojave and I was carrying my camera, by this mojave that was a rock, and he struck at me! But but he struck kind of toward the camera, I think, much about it. And then whenever I see that, the camera starts shooting pictures. I noticed that all of the photographs were blurry. And he had struck that super wide angle lens I was using, I believe it was a. Fifteen mm. I think, he stuck. No, no, no, no, it was a 14 mm. Rectilinear 14 mm. 2.8 L Canon lens. Right in the middle of the glass. And that poison's totally covered that lens... And it just made it look like I was looking through a Coke bottle. But the spookiest was I had a photograph of the Mojave one day and it was chilly. And I thought, well, you know, chilly day...snakes move slow. So I, I had him sitting on our on a ridge that I could straddle, like a little pulled back and I could straddle that ridge and I had a 100 millimeter macro lens. And because Mohave's, one of the characteristics of them happens to be the scales between their eyes. That's how you can scientifically, I am told, tell them from a Western diamondback. But I was I was able to you know, you can also, I think, tell by the width of the straps on their tail, your black and

the white stripes. But anyway, so I was leaned over and I was only like maybe a foot and a half above this rattlesnake. And he was coiled-up looking straight ahead. And that's son-of-a-gun struck at me straight up!

Rebecca Zerlin [00:45:59] Are you serious?!?

Wyman Meinzer [00:46:01] And I jumped and fell down on him! (Laughter) And that rattlesnake when he struck straight up...well, he landed on his back. And he was slow in trying to right himself for another shot at me. And I was trying like hell get off of him! (Laughter) And that is that....rattlesnakes don't scare me...but that rattlesnake put the fear of god in me! (Laughter).

Rebecca Zerlin [00:46:29] Yeah. Wow! So, and, you've never been bitten?

Wyman Meinzer [00:46:34] No, I don't intend to be! (Laughter). I've been around a lot of rattlesnakes. I remember one time I was calling coyotes, and I was this is when I was younger and I ran everywhere and I was just everywhere I went. I'd just run! Because I wanted to get as much done as I could in a short period of time. I was running back to my vehicle in some high grass and I ran up on a big western diamondback, up here above the Badlands West Vedran. And I never I knew I could veer left or right; so, I just jummped. (Laughter) And I went over the top of him, and when I did, he just rose up and just it just started buzzing at me as I went along, I just kinda saluted him and kept going. (Laughter).

Rebecca Zerlin [00:47:19] Yeah, well, wow. I bet you have had some close encounters.

Wyman Meinzer [00:47:25] Yeah. It's all been exciting. It's been it's been a good time. I can't complain about anything. I've met so many...I'll tell you what, I've met so many good people across the country. There's so many wonderful people and people say, man, you accomplished so much. Maybe I have, but I couldn't have done anything without the help of so many people.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:47:51] Oh, that's nice.

Wyman Meinzer [00:47:54] I mean, they're just they're just willing to help. They love photography, you know, good images, and they go they'll call me and say, hey, man, we found this. You know, when you come out and see, and and you just ranchers, you know, saying, hey, you bet, come on. Because I know most or nearly all ranches, let's say. It struck otherwise, I never say where they are, right, my images are taken and so I'm very quiet about that. Very secretive unless somebody says, I don't care. And and so I've got I have access to a lot of really neat country. And I can say without without these people, I couldn't do it.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:48:35] Uh huh, uh huh. I believe you. I didn't I didn't grow up in Texas. I grew up in Indiana. And a lot of folks, you know, a lot of folks try to try to make fun of Texas. But I tell you what, when you get to meet the ranchers particularly, I think the people in Texas are just made of gold.

Wyman Meinzer [00:48:53] Yeah. I don't know why they'd want to make fun of us. We're just good guys and gals.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:48:58] I think it's a little bit of jealousy myself. Yeah, but yeah. But the people are just made of gold here. I just love Texans.

Wyman Meinzer [00:49:08] I agree. Yeah, I agree.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:49:11] Well, thank you so much for spending time with us today.

Wyman Meinzer [00:49:14] It's my pleasure!

Rebecca Zerlin [00:49:15] I have thoroughly enjoyed hearing from you.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:49:18] Yeah, I've really enjoyed your stories.

Wyman Meinzer [00:49:20] Well, I hope our our our paths cross soon, I like chatting with you gals.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:49:25] Maybe you can maybe you can come back on the fire with us again someday.

Wyman Meinzer [00:49:32] Oh! that would be nice!

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:49:58] Well, thanks so much, Weiman. Sure. I really appreciate you.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:50:03] Oh. Well, that was really interesting. I love talking to Weiman, because he is so many different stories. He's had such neat life experiences.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:50:16] Yeah, those were some really cool and somewhat terrifying stories.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:50:23] And I love, you know, people who talk about how, you know, how other people have helped them along the way. I just love that. And you find that those people are actually some of the most generous also with their time and their and their energy. So I like hearing that. Yeah, yeah. But I guess that's a wrap for us today.

Rebecca Zerlin [00:50:45] So so tune in next time. And remember, don't feed the wildlife.

Dr. Sandra Rideout-Hanzak [00:50:50] A Talk on the Wild Side is a production of the Caeser Kleburg Wildlife Research Institute of Texas A&M University-Kingsville. Funding for this project is provided by the Harvey Weil Sportsmen and Conservationists Award, by the Rotary Club of Corpus Christi. Editing was completed by the talented Gabby Olivas, Andrew Lowery and Tre' Kendall. We thank the TAMUK Distance Learning Lab for all their help and cooperation.