



The trophy bull elk above was photographed in October during the fall rut within Rocky Mountain National Park near Estes Park, Colorado.

Wildlife Photography Creates Conservation

ARTICLE BY BRIAN LOFLIN

Photography in American national park was trailblazed thanks to a portfolio of photographs by William Henry Jackson. Photographer Jackson became a vital element of the 1870 party of U.S. geologist Ferdinand V. Hayden which explored and surveyed the Yellowstone region of the Wyoming Territory. Jackson produced many photographs and paintings of the astonishing and unknown landscapes and geothermal features of the region.

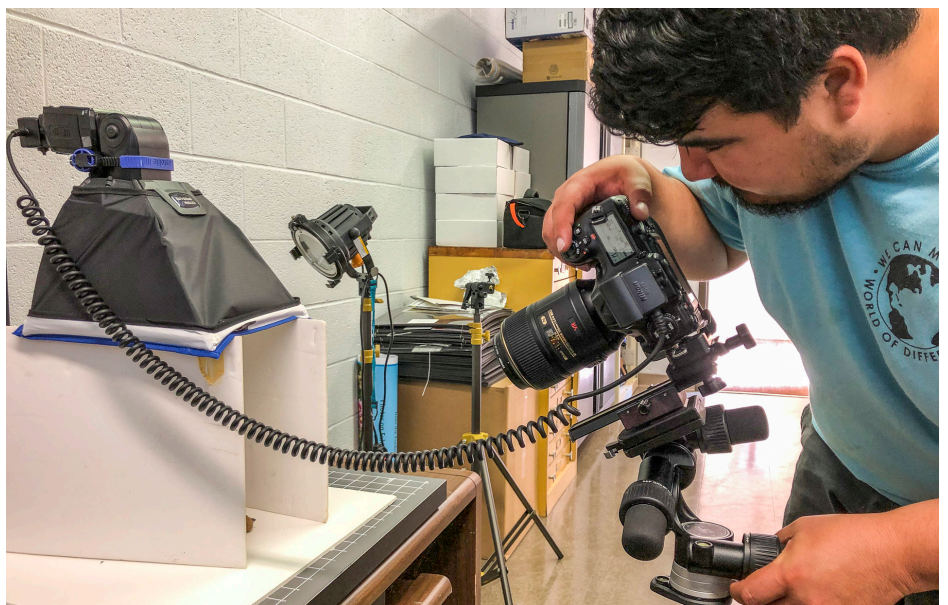
Returning east in early October 1871, Hayden and Jackson joined a lobbying effort and presented the portfolio to U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant. Grant helped convince congress to set aside, preserve and protect this land for the public. Subsequently, this became Yellowstone National Park and the U.S National Park system was born in 1872.

Aldo Leopold, father of wildlife ecology and modern conservation in America, wrote that the axe, plow, cow, fire and

Photography supports wildlife research in the field including this team at an aerial nilgai capture in South Texas.



Photographer William Henry Jackson c 1870.
U.S. Geological Survey photo.



A student in the Wildlife Photography program at Texas A&M University-Kingsville completes a photography project in the lab.

gun were destructive tools. He also observed that the careful and creative use of the same five tools are instrumental to restore habitat, revitalize land and wildlife, and conserve the environment for the future.

Today, in addition to Leopold's five tools, the camera has become one of the greatest tools of wildlife conservation. Human retention of information is a result of 10% of what they hear, 20% of what they read and surprisingly, 80% of what they see! Nothing stirs emotions, motivates action, or promotes understanding like a picture. These impacts make photography a powerful medium when used to support wildlife conservation. Photography provides that important visual medium.

Throughout the years we have been blessed by exciting, high-technology and educational programming on television. Early programming, including Mutual of Omaha's *Wild Kingdom* and Marty Stouffer's *Wild America* led the way into our homes and hearts. These were followed by more recent environmental productions featuring Sir David Attenborough and Texas' own Ben Masters.

Because of these shows, we take for granted the ease of photographing the environment and the interactions of species. Many people falsely believe that wildlife photography is a walk through the woods with a good camera. Nothing could be further from the truth!

Effective photographic stories require significant preparation and organizing elements behind the scenes to bring the project together. Success greatly depends upon knowing the biology of the subject matter and understanding its habitat, lifestyle and behavior. Placing the right equipment in the right place at the right time is paramount. Photographers must get close to their subject to produce good photographs. This requires mastery of many skills, tools and techniques.

The role and responsibility of the wildlife photographer is to create photographic documentation of the world's wildlife and the habitat with images that are true-to-life for documentation, educational and informational purposes. In doing so, the photographer can tell the wildlife story, including animal relationships and dynamics within their environment in support of understanding and conserving the



Javelina, or collared peccary, are South Texas specialties and the mascot of Texas A&M University-Kingsville.



Many television programs, such as Mutual of Omaha's *Wild Kingdom*, brought amazing wildlife scenes into our homes and lives.

Wildlife Photography Creates Conservation

ecosystem. Photographers also support wildlife researchers with imagery to document and communicate their work in the field and in the lab.

In addition to photographic competence, the photographer must maintain the highest ethical standards in photographic image quality and in the handling, husbandry and photography of wildlife subjects. Finally, the photographer has a responsibility to create and maintain an archive of digital assets that meet standards for retrieval, distribution and publication for oneself and other professionals.

So, what does the future of wildlife photography hold? New digital photographic equipment and technology enables photographers to illustrate subjects and events that were not possible just a few years ago.

But sadly, many names of great wildlife programs are gone. Marlin Perkins, Jack Hanna and other personalities have gone. At 99, even the remarkable Sir David Attenborough, as well as many others won't be with us much longer.

So where is the source of the new blood? The burden is upon us. We in the educational community must train professional talent to enter the ranks of these specialty production teams. These teams need scientists to research and to



Wildlife photography is much more than a hike through the woods with a camera and long lens.



Photography students support research activities on the Kingsville campus and in the field.

explain, writers to script and photographers to illustrate through pictures and video the world's great natural wonders.

In addition to research and science education, Texas A&M University-Kingsville (TAMU-K) now offers a curriculum in Wildlife Photography. Designed for students from any major, undergraduates and graduate students can now enroll in this multi-year program, leaving with a professional degree in their selected discipline and armed with a certificate or minor in Wildlife Photography.

The six semester classes include the art and design of photographs combined with composition and the camera skills to excel. Advanced classes explore lighting, color, digital technology, computer production and publication of images vital to a student's academic area.

The program is led by Brian Loflin, an award-winning professional wildlife and biological photographer. A biologist by education and author of several books, Brian has decades of ex-



Reptiles and amphibians are an important part of the ecosystem. Rattlesnakes keep the rodent pests controlled.

perience producing images and materials for publications and other media.

This program began through a sizeable donation from a private charitable trust, funding the purchase of professional camera and computer equipment, and bolstering the success of the program by providing operational expenses.

The Wildlife Photography students learn to photograph landscapes, a variety of still life subjects, and many species from birds and mammals to reptiles and amphibians. Additionally, students support research programs such as deer captures and other field activities, participate in photography in the labs, and produce exhibits for the campus museum.

The mission of the Wildlife Photography program is to teach students to be better communicators in their chosen field and to enable students to have increased marketable skills in the employment market. To date 184 students have enrolled in Wildlife Photography, nine have completed minors and 15 received transcript certificates.

Through the TAMU-K Workforce Development department, the university is creating an on-online, non-credit version of the three basic photography classes, including macro and competency with computer software. Students who successful complete these classes earn a professional certificate in Wildlife Photography. Workforce Development is committed to providing high-quality training and professional development opportunities that prepare competitive individuals for in-demand careers. 🌟

For more information, email workforce@tamuk.edu, phone 361-593-4478 or contact Brian Loflin at brian.loflin@tamuk.edu.



40TH ANNIVERSARY PRINTS



In celebration of Texas Wildlife Association's 40th Anniversary, Texas artist Noelle M. Brooks presents *The Look of the Land*—a breathtaking original oil painting capturing the wild heart of our state.

Order prints to commemorate TWA's 40 years of impact—this is not just art; it's a legacy.

40 SIGNED & NUMBERED LIMITED EDITION PRINTS AVAILABLE

ORDER NOW

Order prints online at bit.ly/TWA40Print