

CAMERA SHOTS AT BIG GAME

BY
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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
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INTRODUCTION

IT is a pleasure to write an introduction to Mr. Wallihan's really noteworthy book, for his photographs of wild game possess such peculiar value that all lovers, whether of hunting or of natural history, should be glad to see them preserved in permanent form. The art and practice of photographing wild animals in their native haunts has made great progress in recent years. It is itself a branch of sport, and hunting with the camera has many points of superiority when compared to hunting with the rifle. But, even under favorable conditions, very few men have the skill, the patience, the woodcraft and plainscraft which enabled Mr. Wallihan to accomplish so much; and, moreover, the conditions as regards most of our big game animals are continually changing for the worse. The difficulties of getting really good and characteristic photographs are such as to be practically insuperable where game is very scarce and very shy, and throughout most of the United States game is steadily growing scarcer and shyer. Photographs in a game preserve, no matter how large this preserve, are, of course, not quite the same thing.

The elk have now almost everywhere diminished in numbers so that it would be very difficult indeed to get pictures like some

of Mr. Wallihan's, and though the blacktail and the antelope last better, yet they, too, can nowhere be found as they were but a dozen years ago. The cougar pictures have an especial value. Where cougars are plentiful it is easier to take their photographs than in the case of deer, and there are a number of localities in the Rockies where they are still fairly abundant; but they are steadily growing scarcer, and where they have become really scarce the work of the photographer becomes one of such hopeless labor, the chance for success is so very small, as to be practically prohibitive. There are still cougars east of the Mississippi, but nowadays it would be a simple impossibility for any man to take of them such pictures as Mr. Wallihan has taken of the Colorado cougars. Moreover, even where cougars are plentiful, the photographer might work a lifetime before getting such a remarkable picture as that of the cougar jumping in mid-air. As I know from practical experience, it is exceedingly difficult, even when the cougar has been treed, to get a really fine photograph, as it is not possible to choose the conditions of ground and light in advance.

Mr. Wallihan's hunting was in northwestern Colorado and western Wyoming—regions where I have often followed the game he describes. There are no whitetail deer in the country he covered, the buffalo were extinct before he began work with his camera, and he never had luck with bears. But his series of elk, antelope, blacktail and mountain lion pictures leave little to be desired. It is, by the way, difficult to determine whether to use the ordinary vernacular names of these

animals, or their book names, which are better in themselves, but which unfortunately have not been popularly adopted. The elk, for instance, has no resemblance to the animal properly called the elk in the Old World, which is the blood brother of the moose, nor yet to the other animals improperly called elk in Asia and Africa. The blacktail of the Rocky Mountains is not the true blacktail of the Pacific coast. The antelope is not an antelope at all, occupying an entirely unique position as the only hollow-horned ruminant which annually sheds its horns. It would be far better if the three could be known as wapiti, mule-deer and prong-buck. But unfortunately they are rarely known by these titles in common speech. With the cougar the case is a little different. It is sometimes called cougar among the ranchmen, and the names of panther and mountain lion, by which it is known respectively in the East and in the West, are so misleading that it is best to drop them and give it the proper title.

The elk, or wapiti, were still plentiful in northwestern Colorado a decade ago, going in large herds. The merciless persecution they have suffered for the sake of their flesh, hide, antlers and teeth has resulted in the species being reduced to a few hundred individuals. The Wyoming elk are travelling the same path, although the existence of the great protected nursery and breeding-ground in the Yellowstone National Park has delayed the process and gives us reasonable hope that the animals will never become entirely extinct. The part played by true sportsmen, worthy of the name, in this extinction has

been nil, and indeed very little appreciable harm has been done by any men who have merely hunted in season for trophies. The real damage has come from the professional hunters and their patrons. In a wild frontier country it is too much to expect that the settlers will not occasionally kill meat for their own use, though every effort should be made to educate them to the knowledge that a wapiti or deer free in the woods will, by attracting tourists, bring into the neighborhood many times as much money as the dead carcass would represent. The professional game butchers, however, have no excuse of any kind. They kill the animal for the hide and for the flesh. Moreover, the horns are strikingly ornamental and are freely purchased by a certain class of wealthy people who wholly lack the skill and hardihood necessary to those who would themselves be hunters, and who have not the good taste to see that antlers properly have their chief value as trophies. Nothing adds more to a hall or a room than fine antlers when they have been shot by the owner, but there is always an element of the absurd in a room furnished with trophies of the chase which the owner has acquired by purchase. Even less defensible is it either to kill or to put a premium upon the killing of this noble and beautiful creature for the sake of its teeth. Yet the habit of wearing elk's teeth on watch-chains and the like has been responsible for no small amount of slaughter. The Audubon societies have done useful work in trying to prevent the destruction of song-birds and waders for millinery purposes. It would be well if some

similar society would wage war against the senseless fashion of wearing elk's teeth when the wearer has not shot the animal; for such a fashion simply becomes one cause of extermination.

The mule, or Rocky Mountain blacktail, deer is in some localities migratory. This is the case in Colorado, where the winter and summer ranges of the deer are wholly distinct, and where during the migrations the animals follow well-established trails leading over and among the mountains and across the streams. Some of Mr. Wallihan's most beautiful pictures are those taken of deer crossing a stream. In dealing with the prong-horn antelope, on the other hand, a shy and far-sighted creature of the dry, open prairie, almost the only chance consisted in catching the game when it came to drink. Incidentally it will be seen that Mr. Wallihan in his description lays stress upon the superior keenness of vision of the antelope as compared to the deer. Mr. Wallihan is a very close and accurate observer, as indeed it was necessary he should be in order to obtain such results as he has obtained. His remarks on the comparative dullness of the deer's eyesight are in accord not only with my experience, but with those of almost every first-class hunter whom I have met. Yet I have known book authorities to assert the contrary. Of course it is all a matter of comparison. A deer's vision is better than that of a buffalo, and, I believe, better than that of a bear, and a motion catches its eye at once. But the antelope has better sight by far than any other game, and will be brought to a condition of alert suspicion by the sight of a man at a distance so great that he

would be practically certain to escape observation from a deer.

In Mr. Wallihan's cougar hunting he had the good fortune to be associated with Mr. Frank Wells, a first-class hunter with an excellent pack of hounds. Mr. Wells is not only a good hunter, but a good observer. He has written two or three pieces about cougars and cougar hunting which are filled with refreshing common sense, in striking contrast to the average tales on the subject. More nonsense has been talked and written about the cougar than about any other American beast. Even experienced hunters often gravely talk of cougars ten and eleven feet long. As Mr. Wells has pointed out, these figures are never even approximated. The animal is variable in size, and very rarely a monster old male will reach the length of eight feet; but by no system of fair measurement will any cougar ever be found to go more than a very few inches over this limit, and even an eight-foot cougar is a giant of its kind. Hardly one in a hundred reaches such a length. The cougar is very destructive to deer and colts as well as calves, sheep, young elk, etc. When pressed by hunger, big cougars will kill full-grown elk, horses and cattle; but they are cowardly beasts, and not only is it a wholly exceptional circumstance for them to attack any human being unprovoked, but they do not even make an effective fight against man when cornered. They rarely charge, and, as far as I know, never from any distance. A small number of really good fighting dogs can kill a cougar, and it readily trees even before dogs

that would be quite incapable of mastering it. If man or dog comes close up, there is of course danger from the formidable jaws and sharp claws; but commonly the danger is only to the pack. Only in very rare cases is there any to the hunter. Owing to the cougar's habits, the only method of pursuing it which offers any reasonable chance of success is with hounds. It is occasionally killed by accident without hounds, but under such circumstances the chances of success are so small as not to warrant even the most skilful hunter making a practice of pursuing it in this manner.

Mr. Wallihan is not only a good photographer, but a lover of nature and of the wild life of the wilderness. His pictures and his descriptions are good in themselves as records of a fascinating form of life which is passing away. Moreover, they should act as spurs to all of us to try to see that this life does not wholly vanish. It will be a real misfortune if our wild animals disappear from mountain, plain and forest, to be found only, if at all, in great game preserves. It is to the interest of all of us to see that there is ample and real protection for our game as for our woodlands. A true democracy, really alive to its opportunities, will insist upon such game preservation, for it is to the interest of our people as a whole. More and more, as it becomes necessary to preserve the game, let us hope that the camera will largely supplant the rifle. It is an excellent thing to have a nation proficient in marksmanship, and it is highly undesirable that the rifle should be wholly laid by. But the shot is, after all, only a small part of the free life of the wilderness.

The chief attractions lie in the physical hardihood for which the life calls, the sense of limitless freedom which it brings, and the remoteness and wild charm and beauty of primitive nature. All of this we get exactly as much in hunting with the camera as in hunting with the rifle; and of the two, the former is the kind of sport which calls for the higher degree of skill, patience, resolution, and knowledge of the life history of the animal sought.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

Dated Sagamore Hill, Oyster Bay, N. Y.,
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