

The Camera Hunter®

The Power of Déjà Vu

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"It's déjà vu all over again". Most folks use that phrase with the wry humor that legendary New York Yankee Yogi Berra intended when he first said it.

Isn't it fascinating when truly wonderful things do seem to happen "all over again"? Those looking for the secret to better wildlife photography shouldn't overlook the power of déjà vu.

My journey to a career as a professional wildlife and nature photographer began 16 years ago with attempts to get photographs of the wildlife of the Goosefare Marsh in Saco. The Goosefare Brook ecosystem was threatened by a major development proposal. Having lived near it for years, I knew that a diversity of animals depended on the serenity of this mostly still wild place.

So I set out with a simple 35mm camera and short telephoto lens to get proof of what was out there in the hopes that such pictures might motivate the community to protect it. The story of how a small group of citizens worked towards an equitable solution to conserve the Goosefare Marsh as part of the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, with the help of The Nature Conservancy and Maine's Congressional delegation, is told in a chapter of my newest book **Saving Maine: An Album of Conservation Success Stories** (Down East Books, July 2002).

But there's a story that's not in that book. It's the story of how my ability to capture wildlife on film was helped by someone who came to the first slide talk the citizen's group held. In those days, Glenn Evans taught for an environmental school that hosted grade school groups a week at a time to teach them the wonders of nature at the Goosefare Brook ecosystem. Glenn knew from the slide show that night that I needed to learn more about the things I sought to photograph and so he offered to guide me.

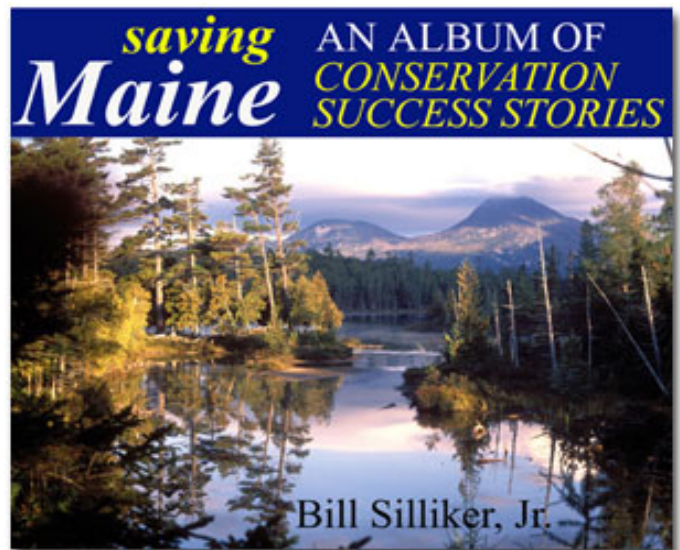
We became good friends, and have since spent many days hiking in other special places. His enthusiasm for nature has inspired me to keep going back to the wild with a camera.

About the same time, I discovered the work of Leonard Lee Rue III, the most published wildlife photographer of all time. Through his books and magazine articles, Rue became my photography mentor, teaching me the tradecraft a serious wildlife photographer needs to know. By matching that knowledge with the inspired curiosity for nature learned from Glenn, I eventually became a better wildlife photographer.

One day while hiking Glenn said that he had first really become interested in learning about wildlife the day that a famous wildlife photographer did a slide talk at his New Jersey grade school. His already active interest in nature became a lifelong passion. Today, Glenn teaches biology at a mid-coast Maine high school.

"Who was that?" I asked.

"A guy named Leonard Lee Rue III."



A few years ago, I had the privilege of guiding that same Leonard Lee Rue III in the Maine woods. Now into his 70's, Lennie Rue has picked up the video camera to start a whole new career documenting nature. If you watch Maine Public Television, you've seen his work. He knew from looking at **Just Loons**, my book with author Alan Hutchinson, that I had learned how to work with loons without bothering them, and as we'd met on a few occasions in our travels, he asked me to help him find some loons to capture on video.

While we were watching loons on a remote Maine pond I told him how he had so inspired my friend Glenn. He just smiled and said that it was a wonderful thing being able to touch lives in that way through an interest in nature.

There's also "déjà vu - all over again" in the story of the picture with this month's column. It starts with the fact that it's the first photograph I ever sold. A few years later, The Wilderness Society made it a poster to inspire better protection of the Maine Woods. Two years after that, the Maine Audubon Society wanted a shot for their magazine, *Habitat*, with either a canoe or a moose in it. This photograph has neither, but it made the cover.

While Glenn Evans wasn't there the day I shot it, we've hiked together to this place, the outlet of Grassy Pond in Baxter State Park, several times. However, it has never looked as good as it did that day. That's an important piece of this story as well: no place ever really looks the same way twice. Nature changes constantly and the light always catches it differently. That's part of its magic, and why you just have to keep going back again and again. And why you should - when it looks this good - shoot lots of film.

So does déjà vu really ever happen for nature photographers? You decide... this picture also now graces the cover of **Saving Maine**. From over 300 images provided to the editors at Down East Books, they picked this one.

I can't tell you just why that is. But I'll bet that Yogi Berra could.

Catch yours in the good light.

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<http://camerahunter.com>

Editor's Note - "Provia F, Bald Eagles and Brown Bears" a Fuji Pronet Tour to Katmai National Park led by "The Mooseman," Bill Silliker, Jr., in June 2002, was so successful that he'll be doing it again in 2003! For information on this special shoot, which will feature nesting bald eagles and coastal brown bears, query The Mooseman at bill@themooseman.com.

Comments on this column? Send them to the [editor](#).



Maine wildlife & nature photographer Bill Silliker, Jr. - The Camera Hunter® - has photographed at many wild places in North America, with the results published in *Audubon*, *Backpacker*, *Field & Stream*; *National Wildlife*, *Outdoor Photographer*, *Outdoor Life*, *Sports Afield* and many other magazines; in exclusive calendar projects on loons, moose, wildlife and Maine's Baxter State Park, and in his books: *Just Eagles*; *Uses For Mooses*; *Moose: Giants of the Northern Forest*; *Just Loons*; and *Maine Moose Watcher's Guide* and his latest book, available in July 2002, *Saving Maine: An Album of Conservation Success Stories*.

Bill has been an instructor of wildlife and nature photography with L. L. Bean's Outdoor Discovery Program since 1992 and is a member of the Fuji Film Talent Team. Bill is a past Board member of the North American Nature Photography Association (NANPA) and a professional member of the Outdoor Writer's Association of America (OWAA). He maintains a web site with tips for wildlife photographers at www.camerahunter.com and is editor of a site for all wildlife enthusiasts at www.wildlifewatcher.com.

Bill's work with moose has been featured on National Public Radio's "Living On Earth", his book on bald eagles was featured on CSPAN's "Book TV" and his Daybreak 2000 image of the Millennium's dawn on NBC's "Today Show".