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DU PONT BUILDING
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE 19898

March 14, 1979

Mr. Eliot Porter
Route 4, Box 33
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Dear Mr. Porter:

It's been a long time since we corresponded and I am sorry we live so far apart that getting together presents difficulties. I have, however, kept in touch with your publications and every time I see one it reinforces the admiration I feel for your extraordinarily excellent photographic technique.

So far as I am concerned, my wife and I go on bird excursions whenever we can, and as you can imagine, there is always a camera along. I come back with hundreds of pictures, half of which I throw away.

I don't know whether you have ever been to Patagonia in Chile. We had a week there last November in a perfectly beautiful park called the Torres del Paine where the scenery is about as spectacular as I have ever seen and the birds unusual and cooperative. You would have a field day.

All of this is by way of introduction as to the real purpose behind this letter. I have worried for a good many years about what would become of my collection of photographs when I go to my reward. Since I am now approaching my seventy-seventh birthday, the mortality tables tell me I have six or seven more years to do my worrying. Over a long period I have photographed something over a thousand species in many parts of the world. My first notion was to deposit them with a major natural history museum with the hope that the pictures would be used to supplement their skin collections and so provide an added tool for classification. In pursuing that thought, I got nowhere with the American Museum in New York nor the U. S. National Museum in Washington. The U. S. National Museum showed no interest at all. The Museum in New York was quite willing to have the collection with the idea that they would use it for commercial purposes but they had no scientific interest in it.

I hit pay dirt when I talked to the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. This, as you may know, is the oldest natural history museum and research organization in the United States and one of the most distinguished in spite of the fact that it is much smaller than either the New York or Washington Museums.

They are enthusiastic about using my collection as a nucleus for a major photographic collection which would be representative of birds of the world generally. They are interested enough to seek grants from various agencies in and out of government to set the collection up, and they have been successful, at least in their initial stages, in arousing interest. They are now approaching other nature photographers to see whether any of them would be willing to deposit their collections at the museum in Philadelphia, and as part of that undertaking, I agreed to write you to see how you felt about the matter. I hasten to say that their primary interest is scientific, not commercial, so if you wished to reserve commercial rights, I am sure they would be quite content. Their present interest is in birds and I think that is enough for them to chew on for the time being so it would be your bird pictures that would interest them.

I'm not recommending this course to you but am merely seeking a point of view. I would like to know whether it appeals to you from a scientific standpoint, what sort of reservations you would like to make for commercial rights, etc., etc. From my point of view I have no commercial interest whatever and would leave them my collection without any strings at all other than the fact I would wish them available for scientific purposes.

Let me know in due course how the idea strikes you and if you see any snags or any disagreeable consequences so far as your own collection is concerned.

Beyond that should you ever come east and be anywhere near our neighborhood, I hope you will let me know.

Sincerely,

Marion H. Newhall