

August 30, 1979

Mr. Eliot Porter  
c/o The Wilderness Society  
1901 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Mr. Porter:

I am currently an amateur photographer with a strong interest and background in the natural sciences. I want very much to become a professional naturalist-photographer like you. I greatly admire your work, in which you have been so very successful. Please allow me to approach you via this letter for some help or advice to reach my career goal.

I possess a bachelor's degree in biology and have also completed several years of graduate study. My initial plan was to find a graduate program akin to my objective, but I have not succeeded in this. It seems that graduate departments of the various biological sciences at universities are primarily interested in training researchers, not nature photographers.

I feel that there is a tremendous amount that I could learn from you of technique and insight. My loftiest current ambition is to become an apprentice or assistant to you. If this is out of the question, is there another way that I may study and work under you? I learn and acquire skills very rapidly, have good artistic ability and sound character, and have my heart in nature and photography. I feel that such a relationship between us could be mutually very rewarding.

If the above is impossible, can you supply me with some pointers on how I may eventually "break" into professional nature photography? In addition to your own story, perhaps you can tell me how some of the other nature photographers that you know have acquired the training and developed their careers. Do you know of individuals, organizations, publishers, or people planning expeditions who may consider taking on an aspiring photographer like me? I truly want the chance to learn, do good nature photography, and to eventually become an accomplished and known professional. Again, to further my skill and to develop new artistic approaches firsthand from you would please me immensely.

Mr. Porter, if our becoming acquainted would aid your consideration of my proposal, I would gladly travel to you for a meeting. If you require more information, I will promptly send it to you. I would greatly appreciate any help or advice you can supply.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

*Donald L. Stephens, Jr.*  
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