



J. J. Craighead (left) and F. C. Craighead, Jr. (right) in Hell's Canyon at Snake River in 1970.

John and Frank Craighead

A Profile by John L. Weaver

For many people, John and Frank Craighead have exemplified the image of wildlife biologists at work: vibrant naturalists studying wild animals in the field, dedicated scientists carefully analyzing their data, passionate conservationists articulating their findings and implications for resource decisions in a democratic society. Here's a closer look into the lives of these remarkable individuals.

The Craighead brothers were born in Washington, D.C., in 1916. As teenagers, they engaged in falconry with various species of raptors and published their first book, *Hawks in the Hand*, at the age of 21. Their 1937 article, "Adventures with Birds of Prey," in *National Geographic* marked the beginning of a long and important association with the National

Geographic Society. John and Frank Craighead earned their A.B. degrees in Science in 1939 from Pennsylvania State University, followed by their M.S. degrees in Ecology and Wildlife Management in 1940 from the University of Michigan. As Lieutenants in the U.S. Naval Reserve during World War II, the Craighead brothers developed and implemented the Naval survival training program while writing the manual, *How To Survive on Land and Sea*. This training program doubtless saved the lives of many servicemen during the war, and the Craigheads would later use these survival skills in field research under arduous conditions.

After World War II, the Craigheads returned to wildlife research. In the late 1940s on a fellowship

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J. J. Craighead (left) and F. C. Craighead, Jr. (right) with their falcons in 1937

from the Wildlife Management Institute, they compared the annual predation of complete raptor communities in Michigan and Wyoming and each earned a Ph.D. in Vertebrate Ecology in 1950 from the University of Michigan. Their book, *Hawks, Owls, and Wildlife: Ecology of Raptor Predation*, set a standard for the scientific study of raptors. It not only became a classic in its field but also inspired a generation of biologists to study and conserve these neglected types of wildlife.

In 1952, John became Leader of the Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit and Professor of

Zoology and Forestry at the University of Montana in Missoula. He served in that capacity for 25 years, mentoring numerous graduate students, who in turn became leaders in wildlife research, management, and education. One former student wrote:

"Sometimes as a student you get lucky with teachers. John and Frank have always been very busy men, but they also took time to talk, to teach, to share their vast knowledge with the whole group of students around them at that time. We camped, fished, photographed, and spent long, hard hours working together. They shared their vision—their dream of how wild rivers and wildlands could fit into the modern American landscape mosaic—

while teaching us about the stars and flowers, to live lightly on the land, and how vulnerable megacarnivores, wilderness, and wild rivers are to man's expanding sphere of influence."

John received the Outstanding Educator of America award for 1973.

During the 1950s, Frank undertook a variety of assignments, including: Manager of the Desert Game Range for bighorn sheep in Nevada, Wildlife Biologist with the U.S. Forest Service, and Consultant on wildlife and wilderness issues. He was Senior Research Associate and Adjunct Professor at the State

University of New York at Albany from 1967 to 1977. During the 1960s, the Craigheads—particularly Frank—were involved in the conservation of wild rivers; much of the wording of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 came verbatim from Craighead writings.

In 1959, at the request of Yellowstone National Park, the Craigheads launched the first modern investigation of the grizzly bear. During the next 12 years, the Craighead research team collected a most comprehensive set of population data on Yellowstone grizzlies. They pioneered the application of telemetry to study the physiology and ecology of free-ranging grizzly



F. C. Craighead, Jr. (left) and J. J. Craighead (right) in 1959



J. J. Craighead with golden eagle in 1962

bears. They cooperated in many aspects of Park management, including training Park Rangers in immobilization of these powerful animals and even leading the emergency rescue attempt of a young man who had fallen into Yellowstone Canyon. When a new Park administration re-drafted the terms of their Memorandum of Understanding in a manner that John and Frank believed was an infringement of academic freedom, though, they felt compelled to terminate their research in 1970. The Craigheads (primarily John) would re-enter the grizzly bear recovery scene in the early 1980s in a manner that (in the words of one colleague) "began a political healing process that resulted in broad-based cooperation among most parties interested in the conservation of grizzly bears."

In their later years, the Craigheads have remained active in wildlife conservation. Frank served as Chairman of the Bear Specialist group for the IUCN during 1974-1976 and wrote the book *Track of the Grizzly* in 1979. He founded the Craighead Environmental Research Institute in Moose, Wyoming, in 1978. His 1994 book *For Everything There Is a Season: The Sequence of Natural Events in the Grand Teton-Yellowstone Areas* describes the phenology of plants and animals in that ecosystem based on 50 years of intimate observations by a keen naturalist. In recent years, Frank has been afflicted with Parkinson's disease.

In 1978, John founded the Craighead Wildlife-Wildlands Institute in Missoula, Montana. This small

but effective research group continues important wildlife research in Alaska and Montana. John's books, *A Definitive System for Analysis of Grizzly Bear Habitat and Other Wilderness Resources* (a 1983 collaboration with J. S. Sumner and G. B. Scaggs) and *The Grizzly Bears of Yellowstone: Their Ecology in the Yellowstone Ecosystem, 1959-1992* (a 1995 collaboration with J. S. Sumner and J. A. Mitchell), each won The Wildlife Society's publication of the year award.

During their productive careers spanning 5 decades, each of the Craighead brothers has published more than 70 technical papers dealing with bears, elk, raptors, Canada geese, and telemetry. In addition, each brother has published more than 40 popular articles. In their long-standing association with the National Geographic Society, the Craighead brothers have authored 11 articles, 13 educational films, and 3 television documentaries about wildlife and wilderness which have educated and thrilled millions of people around the globe. The positive influence of the Craigheads on public understanding and appreciation of wildlife and wildlife research has been incalculable. While working for federal agencies, universities, and nongovernmental organizations, each brother has received more than a dozen awards and citations in recognition of outstanding service and inspiration. In 1988, the National Geographic Society presented its prestigious Centennial Award to the Craighead brothers (among only 15 so honored) for "great accomplishments in their fields of science and exploration." John and Frank remain strong advocates for wildlife and wilderness preservation.

Consummate field naturalists, competent outdoorsmen, pioneering researchers, deep-digging scholars, engaging educators, staunch defenders of investigative freedom, conservation leaders—John and Frank Craighead have devoted considerable energy, creativity, skill, and integrity to making significant and lasting contributions to wildlife science and conservation throughout their long, productive lives—**John L. Weaver, Ph.D.**, is a Wildlife Biologist for the Wildlife Conservation Society, stationed in Missoula, Montana, and conducts research on large carnivores in the Rocky Mountains.

