

## Theodore Roosevelt and the Great Naturalists

**The period of Theodore Roosevelt's** presidency coincided with an era of activity by some of America's most famous naturalists. Men such as John Burroughs, John Muir and Enos Mills were at their peak in writing about the great wonders of the land. Especially close to Roosevelt was John Burroughs who was a guest at the presidential retreat in Pine Knot, Virginia, and who shared with Roosevelt a common knowledge and love of birds and wildlife. Burroughs was not a hunter, but he respected T.R.'s attitude toward the big game he loved to hunt and to preserve.

In 1903, Roosevelt made a two-month trip through the West, and he invited Burroughs to accompany him during most of the journey. Although T.R. was a celebrity making speeches and appearances at whistle stops along the way, one of the highlights of his trip was two weeks in Yellowstone Park, basically alone with Burroughs as the two friends shared the beauty of its natural wonders. Burroughs wrote about this sojourn in his book, *Camping with President Roosevelt*, published by Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1906. This was later expanded into *Camping and Tramping with Roosevelt*, published the following year.

In his book, Burroughs wrote: "The most interesting thing I saw in that wonderful land was the President himself...I have never been disturbed by the President's hunting trips. It is to such men as he that the big game legitimately belongs — men who regard it from the point of view of the naturalist as well as that of the

sportsman, who are interested in its preservation, and who share with the world the delight they experience in the chase. Such a hunter as Roosevelt is as far removed from the game-butcher as day is from night."

Burroughs later observed: "The President wanted all the freedom and solitude possible while in the Park, so all newspaper men and other strangers were excluded. Even the secret service men and his physician and private secretaries were left at Gardiner. He craved once more to be alone with nature; he was evidently hungry for the wild and the aboriginal."



Roosevelt did not hunt in the Park. One morning, he stated his wish to go alone into the wil-

derness: "Major Pitcher very naturally did not quite like the idea and wished to send an orderly with him. 'No,' said the President. 'Put me up a lunch, and let me go alone. I will surely come back.' And back he surely came...It came out that he had tramped about eighteen miles through a very rough country. The day before, he and the major had located a band of several hundred elk on a broad, treeless hillside, and his purpose was to find those elk, and creep up on them, and eat his lunch under their very noses. And this he did, spending an hour or more within fifty yards of them. He came back looking as fresh as when he started."

Burroughs wrote: "Roosevelt was a man for action in a wide field...his instincts as a naturalist, however, lie back of all his hunting expeditions...certain it is that his hunting records contain more live natural history than any similar records known to me."

John Burroughs' observations on nature until the time of his trip with Roosevelt were confined to the Eastern part of the United States, just as John Muir's were confined to the West. Burroughs was in awe of the grandeur of the West and how easily Roosevelt, an Easterner like himself, had adapted to its ways. In his book, Burroughs shows how Roosevelt, the naturalist, knew, loved

and wanted to preserve for posterity, the great natural wonders of our land. ▲▲▲



**Theodore J. Holsten, Jr.**

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**TOP: THE PRESIDENT ON GLACIER POINT, YOSEMITE VALLEY. INSET: THE PRESIDENT WITH MR. BURROUGHS AND SECRETARY LOEB JUST BEFORE ENTERING THE PARK.**

*Reprinted from Camping and Tramping with Roosevelt*