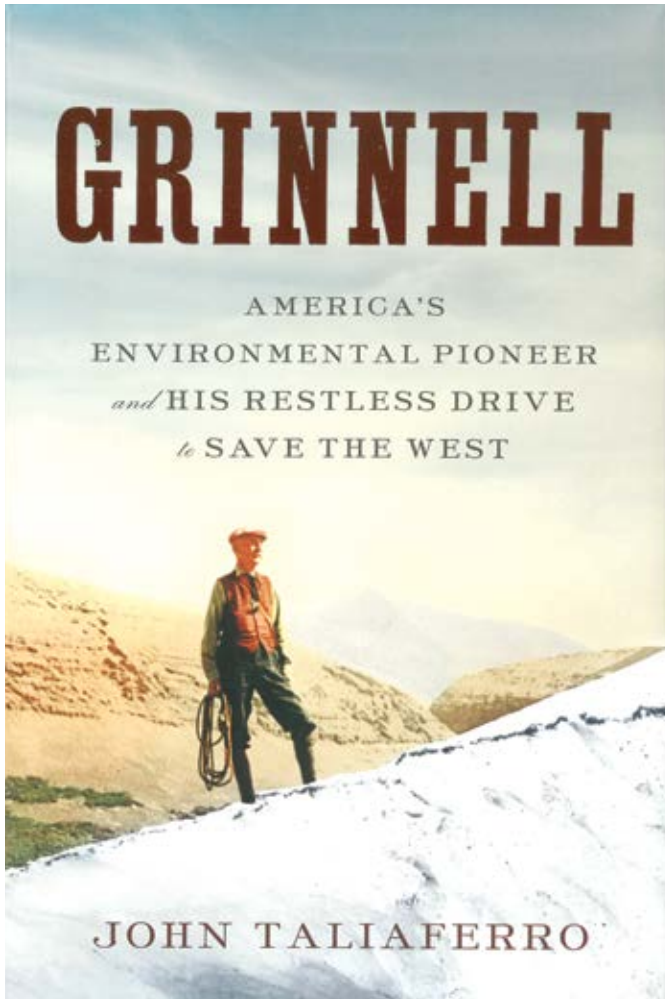


# BOOK REVIEW

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## GRINNELL

### America's Environmental Pioneer and His Relentless Drive to Save the West

BY JOHN TALIAFERRO

The Boone and Crockett Club is truly indebted to author John Taliaferro for his monumental biography of George Bird Grinnell. Grinnell was Theodore Roosevelt's alter ego in creating the Club in 1887 and managing it until he stepped down as president in 1928. After 50 years of service to the Club, he was elected its Honorary President for Life. Grinnell had been a member of the Club for 60 years when he died in 1938, the longest membership in the Club to date. He was president from 1919 to 1928. Moreover, he was a giant in helping structure the conservation movement as it began throughout the 1870s and 80s, and evolved well into the early 1930s. Yet he's never received the recognition he deserved for his role in history, primarily because he was reserved, modest, self-effacing, uncomfortable when he received praise, avoided cameras and the limelight. He never sought credit for his work. His biographer has done our Club a vital service explaining the role Grinnell played in the development of the Boone and Crockett Club and the greater conservation story.

George Bird Grinnell lived for 90 years (1849-1938) spanning the two centuries that witnessed America's move from an agrarian society through the industrial revolution and into the aeronautical age. A prolific writer, Grinnell's works totaled 40,000 pages of correspondence, 50 diaries and notebooks documenting his western expeditions, 36 years of *Forest and Stream* articles and editorials, 7 autobiographical novels written for boys, 23 books on hunting, conservation, Indian culture and history, and an unfinished autobiography. The magnitude of effort author John Taliaferro took to chronologically research the life of George Bird Grinnell was exhaustive and heroic, as was the life of his indefatigable subject.

Grinnell graduated from Yale in 1870 at age 21 and earned his doctorate in 1880 under the tutelage of famed paleontologist Dr. Othniel C. Marsh, director of the Peabody Museum. The summer Grinnell graduated (1870), Dr. Marsh recruited

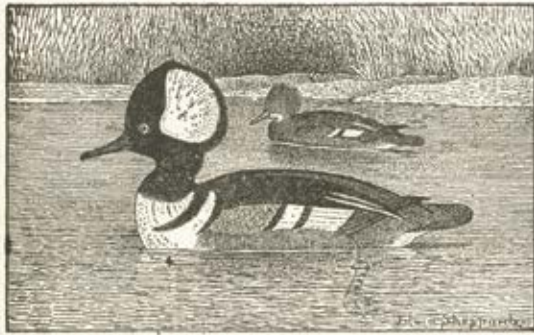


John Taliaferro is a graduate of Harvard College, a former senior editor at *Newsweek*, and the author of five previous books, including *All the Great Prizes*, winner of the Douglas Dillon Award. He lives in Texas and Montana.

Victoria Goodman

# AMERICAN DUCK SHOOTING.

BY GEORGE BIRD GRINNELL.



Specimen illustration.

HOODED MERGANSER (*Lophodytes cucullatus*).

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FOREST AND STREAM PUB. CO.,

346 BROADWAY, NEW YORK.



Specimen illustration.

OLDSQUAW DUCK (*Colymbus septentrionalis*).

*Forest and Stream* was distributed nationally and was the leading voice of sportsmen and naturalists. Grinnell used this national pulpit as a megaphone for 36 years to weekly advocate for and against issues and causes that formed the structural elements of the conservation movement, catapulting him as a major participant and voice in shaping conservation.

Grinnell and several of his Scroll and Key (honor) society brothers for a paleontology expedition in Nebraska, Colorado and Wyoming where they spent the summer excavating pre-historic fossils.

A wanderlust for the West brought him to Kansas in the summer of 1872. He joined the Pawnee tribe and participated in their annual buffalo hunt, the last permitted by the federal government. He hunted side by side with 800 Pawnee warriors, they only clad in breech cloths and riding bareback, using bows and arrows as they had for centuries. It was the most defining experience of his life, mythic and ecstatic for a 23-year-old on his second trip west. He described it as “barbarism pure and simple.” In 1873, laden with family business matters, Grinnell’s hunting time was limited to a brief elk hunt in north-western Nebraska.

In the summer of 1874, General George Armstrong Custer selected Grinnell to accompany him as a naturalist (zoologist-paleontologist) on an exploratory expedition to survey the Black Hills in the Dakota Territory. During the summer of 1875, Captain William Ludlow, who had been on the Custer expedition in 1874, then invited Grinnell as the naturalist on his 1875 survey of the upper reaches of the Missouri River valley and Yellowstone, designated America’s first national park in 1872. His 1875 chronical of the destruction of Yellowstone’s natural resources which supported Captain Ludlow’s report, led to the installation of a military garrison in Yellowstone to protect it. In 1876, General Custer again invited Grinnell to accompany him as a naturalist on an expedition into the Black Hills and the western Dakota Territory. Grinnell however was in Santa Barbara, California, part of that summer with his parents, thus missing the Battle of the Little Big Horn on June 25, 1876, where he would have been killed.

By age 26 (1875), Grinnell completed six western trips and became a recognized national authority on the West before and after it was first being settled and the frontier declared

closed. Grinnell continued his annual trips to the West for much of his life, chronicling its destruction by white colonization, commercial hunting, railroads, timber harvesting, mining, cattle over-grazing, etc. However, the trips each became a reconnaissance endeavor to gain current intelligence on challenges to the wildlife, Indians and threatened landscapes of the West which Grinnell broadly trumpeted.

As his biographer Taliaferro characterized his constant movement bridging the East and West: “He toggled relentlessly between two worlds: East and West, the nineteenth century and the twentieth, the wild and the tame, the entitled and the dispossessed, the civilized and the savage.”

His ability to compare the two spheres of life—East and West—were revelatory. He became a chronicler, educator, interpreter, arbiter, intermediary, negotiator and activist on western issues with some of the brightest minds in the United States. His national recognition in 1873 led to his becoming a writer for Charles Hallock’s weekly publication *Forest and Stream* newspaper, its natural history editor in 1876, and later its owner (1880), spanning the next 36 years to 1911 when Grinnell was 62.

Grinnell’s early childhood education under the tutelage of his neighbor Lucy Audubon, widow of John James Audubon, fostered within him a lifelong study of birds, especially



songbirds. The American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) was established in 1883, and he became an active member, participating in drafting model laws and proposed legislation banning the killing of songbirds for the millinery trade's use of their colorful feathers in ladies' hats. In 1886 he formed the Audubon Society (the Society) as an auxiliary to the AOU to educate and mobilize the public, and shame ladies using feathered hats. *Audubon* magazine was created in 1887. The Society grew to 50,000 members by 1889 and placed an enormous burden on Grinnell's staff, forcing him to discontinue it. In 1905, the National Association of Audubon Societies was reborn, continuing Grinnell's work.

Grinnell learned from this experience how a national group could educate and mobilize the public. This lesson became one of his keys to orchestrating future action at the national level as he repeatedly did throughout his career by grafting himself onto a series of organizations and assuming a spokesman and leadership position. Notable among these included Audubon, Boone and Crockett Club, New York Zoological Society, American Museum of Natural History, American Forestry Association, National Parks Association, Camp Fire Club, and American Game Protective Association.

*Forest and Stream* was distributed nationally and was the leading voice of sportsmen and naturalists. Grinnell used this national pulpit as a megaphone for 36 years to weekly advocate for and against issues and causes that formed the structural elements of the conservation movement, catapulting him as a major participant and voice in shaping conservation. No other participant in the conservation arena—either elected or appointed—could equal Grinnell's position and influence as a publicist over these 36 years. His complex career and reputation were thus built on three legs: (1) his extensive field experience and observations of the West; (2) his influence as spokesman for influential national organizations; and (3), his weekly editorials and serial columns chronicling the natural world's challenges in *Forest and Stream*.

The promotion of hunting ethics, Fair Chase, and the sportsmen's code of conduct afield were early causes Grinnell promoted in *Forest and Stream*. He was particularly hard on ruthless market hunters that other periodicals were afraid to challenge. For years Grinnell promoted game laws and regulations being promulgated and enforced. As an original founding member and leader of the Boone and Crockett Club in 1887, he immediately had a vehicle of influential people who could help him elevate his voice (especially in Washington, D.C.) to stop market hunting which was leading to the extinction of multiple species across the country. Their combined efforts resulted in the Alaska Game Law of 1902 and 1908 (which became a model game law many states adopted), and the Lacey Act of 1900 preventing the transport of illegally killed birds and animals across state lines.

The protection of Yellowstone National Park utilizing acts of Congress in the 1890s set the stage for wildlife protection in all national parks. The Club's political agenda for its first three decades was largely a product of Grinnell's leadership and educating his colleagues of causes and initiatives imperative to conservation. Notable was the Weeks-McLean Act of 1913, precursor to the Migratory Bird Treaty of 1918, that took almost 10 years to negotiate through Congress. The eight books published by the Club were edited by Grinnell, three with Theodore Roosevelt.

The preservation of Yellowstone National Park became a lifelong obsession of Grinnell from his reconnaissance of it as a naturalist in 1875 to his death in 1938. Grinnell began a blistering campaign to hold the Yellowstone Park Improvement Company, the Park's concessioner, in check by congressional action successfully led by Senator George Vest, a fellow Club member and champion of conservation. Moreover the new



After 25 years of dedication Glacier National Park was recognized in 1910. In September 1923, Grinnell and his wife Elizabeth visited the park to hike on Grinnell Glacier.

**Taliaferro characterized his constant movement bridging the East and West: “He toggled relentlessly between two worlds: East and West, the nineteenth century and the twentieth, the wild and the tame, the entitled and the dispossessed, the civilized and the savage.”**

legislation provided for troops to garrison in Yellowstone to protect the slaughtering of game, and protect its natural resources and geysers.

In 1891, utilizing the combined influence of the newly created Boone and Crockett Club and the American Forestry Association, Grinnell engineered a congressional rider (Forest Reserve Act of 1891) giving the president of the United States the power to set aside timbered public lands as public reservations. Immediately thereafter, President Harrison set aside 1.25 million acres (roughly 500 square miles) on the eastern and southern boundaries of Yellowstone to further protect its borders with a buffer known as the Yellowstone Park Timberland Reserve. After repeated attempts, Grinnell together with six Boone and Crockett colleagues in 1892 secured passage of the Yellowstone Park Protection Act, which permanently banned all hunting of birds or wild animals in the park. As late as the 1920s, when Grinnell was in his late 70s, he was again working with Congress as a spokesman for four national conservation groups to stop the damming up of Yellowstone Lake to create an irrigation source for a group of eastern Idaho ranchers wanting to bore a tunnel under the Continental Divide, which separated the lake from Idaho.

The area of today's Glacier National Park was first surveyed by Grinnell in 1885. It was like the Yellowstone he surveyed 10 years earlier, untrammelled by people and parts unmapped. He was captured by its romantic beauty and started a 25-year advocacy utilizing his trademark coalition of several groups to make it a national park, which Congress and

President Taft did in 1910. Grinnell was recognized in the Glacier National Park by three landmarks: Grinnell Glacier, Grinnell Lake and Mount Grinnell. Imbued with the concept of expanding the national park system, Grinnell supported Club Member Charles Sheldon's 10 year advocacy of Mt. McKinley in Alaska for national park status which finally occurred in 1917.

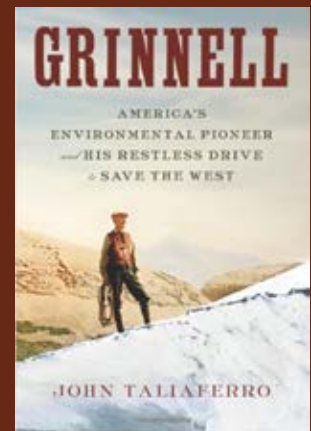
Taliaferro devotes a good amount of his book to Grinnell's work with three Indian tribes. Grinnell's first real encounter began in 1885 with the Blackfeet (Southern Piegan) that lived adjacent to Glacier National Park. Prior to 1885, his attention was one of fascination and the studied observation of a scholar. However, when he began to see their desperate plight to survive from the injustices, fraud and sheer robbery by government-appointed Indian agents, he became their staunch defender and advocate in Washington, D.C. His perspective evolved from a romantic to a pragmatic view. Grinnell's skilled study of Indian culture qualified him as a learned ethnologist, writing nine books on their culture and tribal history.

Taliaferro's struggle to pack in 90 years of Grinnell's indefatigable life at times provides too much distracting information, yet parts are page-turners! Moreover, while all the facts of Grinnell's conservation achievements are presented, the author fails to connect the dots that collectively place Grinnell as a principal architect of the conservation movement. The fascinating book however is a valuable contribution to historical scholarship and highly recommended for the Club's readership. ■

This commemorative plaque was erected by the Boone and Crockett Club in September 1985 as part of its centennial year activities. It recognizes the discovery of Grinnell Glacier and other accomplishments of long-time Club member George Bird Grinnell, who discovered the glacier in 1885. Club President at the time, Red Duke is pictured at right.



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