



In the Southern Wild

Wetlands are vanishing quickly in this country and around the world, but I have to believe in hope, and in the possibility that images as vivid and powerful as these will help remind us of our many blessings, and of the incumbent responsibilities not just to celebrate but to safeguard.

Forward by
Rick Bass



It's hard to imagine any reader of *Mississippi Outdoors* within the last decade not familiar with Rankin County wildlife photographer Joe Mac Hudspeth, Jr. His rich and varied images of wildlife and nature have graced our pages more than any other photographer. And for good reasons.

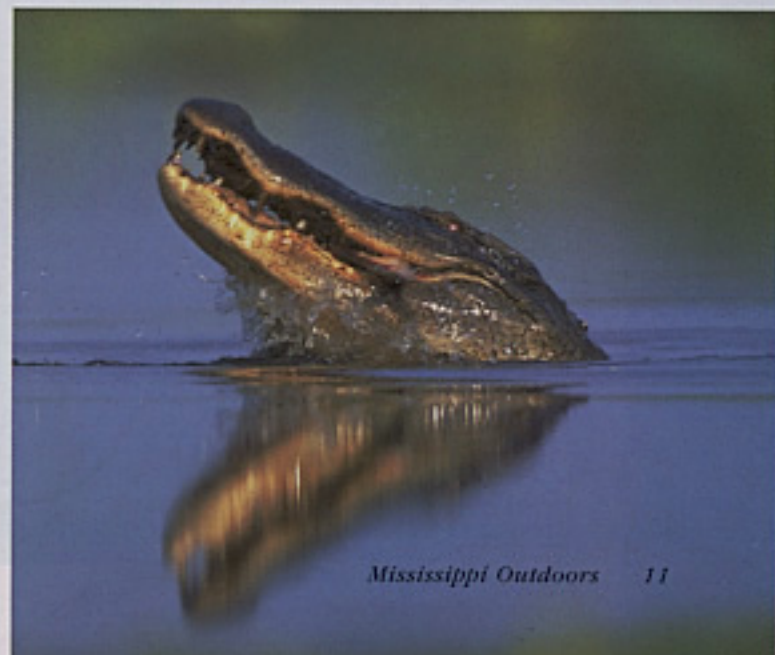
Hudspeth is a patient observer of wildlife in its native habitat and has a rare gift of stillness. Too many would-be nature photographers today want the quick-and-dirty, easy to grab image of a bird walking through a marsh, all a pretense to labeling themselves wildlife photographers.

Possessing a gentle yet inquisitive spirit, Hudspeth waits for the perfect shot. These traits let him capture the image of a mallard bobbing on the water, of a wood stork feeding knee-deep in a freshwater marsh, or a brute alligator on a deadly mission.

In the wetlands of Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Tennessee, Louisiana, and Texas, Hudspeth has taken 150 color photographs to adorn *In the Southern Wild*. To make sure he gets that all-important image, he camouflages false cameras in the wild weeks in advance of an assignment.

This allows native wildlife to grow accustomed to his blind and to his lens and camera.

Once on location, Hudspeth often spends entire mornings or afternoons in near-freezing weather. The resulting images of swamp critters are crisp and glorious, as evident





on every page of *In the Southern Wild*. They should be since Hudspeth is no newcomer to nature, to stalking wildlife, and to experiencing the world of wildlife close up.

"I grew up hunting and fishing in the hills of northern Mississippi," the photographer explained in a recent

interview. "On my trips into the woods, I always carried a Kodak 110 Instamatic.

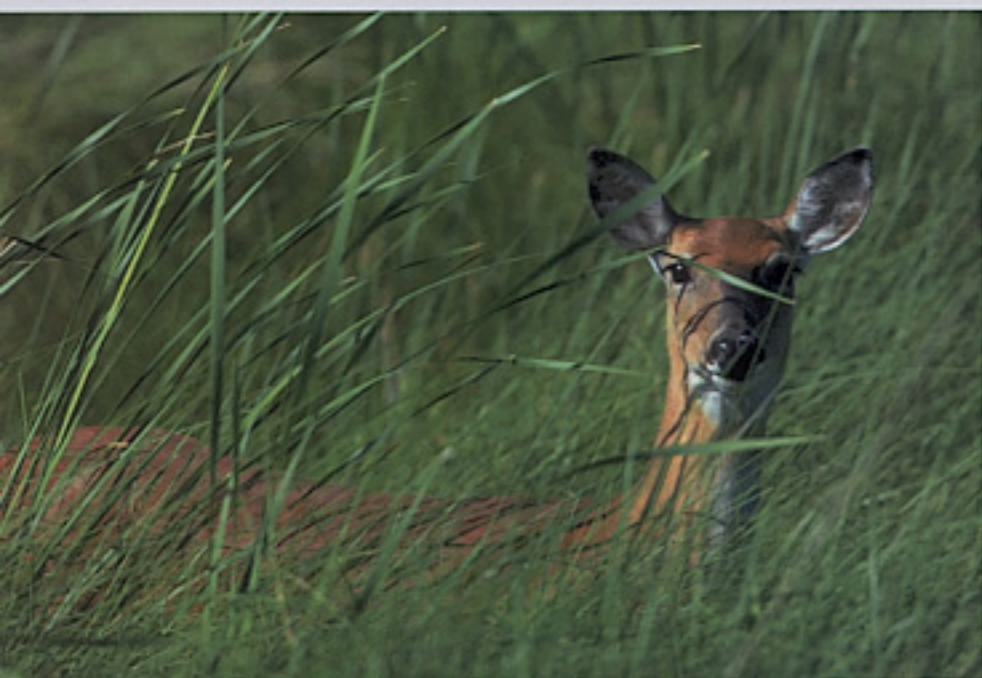
"One frigid January morning, a slight movement in a honeysuckle thicket caught my attention. Moving in for a closer look, I discovered a screech owl sunning himself. When

this little fellow allowed me to get within two feet of him, I took my very first wildlife photograph. At that time, I had never heard of shutter speeds, f-stops, or aperture, and I did not know that my camera would not focus at that close range. This experience, however, stoked a fire that has burned within me ever since."

In the preface to *In the Southern Wild*, Hudspeth details his sense of wonder at individual encounters with wildlife.

"The first morning back in the blind," he writes, "I watched the beaver dam come alive at 5:50 a.m. with at least 20 ducks arriving on cue and landing mere feet away. One actually came to rest on top of my blind. The wood ducks fed and preened for the next hour and a half while I waited for enough sunlight to capture them on film. And capture them I did. That morning I took ten rolls film, quite an accomplishment since I had only taken a total of three rolls of film the whole previous year."

A resident of Brandon, Hudspeth's work has appeared on calendars



published by The Nature Conservancy, on state hunting licenses, state duck stamps, and in magazines such as *Ducks Unlimited*, *Texas Parks & Wildlife*, *Birder's World*, and *Louisiana Conservationist*. In 1993, he was awarded the Roger Tory Peterson Institute for Natural History's Grand Prize for Wildlife.

Acclaimed essayist Rick Bass, a former resident of Mississippi, wrote the preface to *In the Southern Wild*. From his home in the wilds of northern Montana, he has a fondness for these wet, miry environs because he knows their value to our culture, our livelihoods, and our future.

Bass is the author of *The Hermit's Story*, *The Roadless Yaak: Reflections and Observations about One of Our Last Great Wilderness Areas*, *Oil Notes*, *The Watch*, and other books of stories, novellas, and essays. He lives in Yaak, Montana.

Publishers and editors know quality material when they see it. When you peruse *In the Southern Wild*, we think you will too. And with the Christmas season just around the corner, *In the Southern Wild* can be the most important book you give this year.

In the Southern Wild is published by University Press of Mississippi. The work is available in cloth through local booksellers for \$42.

The Dept. of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks' Museum of Natural Science in Jackson will feature an exhibit of the work in Hudspeth's new book. It will run from Dec. 3 through Feb. 9. *In the Southern Wild*, along with other prints and lithographs of the author's work, will be available in the Museum's gift shop.



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