



Dudley Edmondson (1962-Present)

Wild Life Photographer, Author and Videographer

“Find a green space in close proximity to where you live,” suggests Edmondson. “Become a regular there. Go roam around and enjoy. The true definition of freedom is something you can’t find in an urban space. No roads, no electricity, no structure — you’re really on your own. For some people that means fear. For me that means I’m free.” Edmondson, 2014

Overview

Dudley Edmondson is an author, wildlife enthusiast, photographer, videographer, and public speaker. His photography has been featured in galleries and nearly 100 publications around the world. He is the author of the landmark book, “Black & Brown Faces in America’s Wild Places,” profiling African Americans in nontraditional vocations and avocations in the outdoors. Edmondson also contributes to newspapers and magazines and lectures regularly about diversity in the outdoors.

This interview was conducted in 2015.

Early Life and Career

Dudley Edmondson was born in 1962 to Doug and Betty Edmondson. Edmondson and his two siblings were raised by their father, a retired steel-worker and mother, a housewife in Columbus, Ohio. Growing up, Edmondson was exposed to nature and the outdoors constantly. During those times, Edmondson found comfort, peace and quiet. “Getting outdoors on family picnics that were usually on weekends was my way of exploring the world.” These experience were the beginning of his lifelong love of nature and the environment.

In 1997, he began submitting photos for picture books and bird guides. It was at that time that he met and began to work with an author of nature books and a publishing company. The author wrote books that covered plants, mammals and birds all over the country. Edmondson

took most of the photos that were featured in those books. It was a great opportunity for him personally and financially. It allowed him to travel, explore his passion and develop his business.

Contributions

Today he is an author, wildlife enthusiast, photographer and videographer. His photography has been featured in galleries and nearly 100 publications around the world. Dudley Edmondson was the first to highlight the involvement of African Americans in the public lands system. Chagrined at the paucity of people who looked like him among those he encountered in his outdoor pursuits, Mr. Edmondson wrote the landmark book, *Black & Brown Faces in America's Wild Places* (2006) featuring luminaries in the environmental and outdoor recreation fields. He used his skills as a photographer to secure the images included, and took pains to create an accompanying volume suited to a young audience.

Eager to share the richness of the outdoors with all Americans, and particularly Americans of African descent, Mr. Edmondson has been immersed in the effort to help the conservation sector become more inclusive. He inspires many with his life. He is also the perfect role model for the outdoors lifestyle, as he is a birder who climbs mountains as effortless as stroking his kayak through the Everglades wilderness and is a luminary in the environmental movement.

His latest publication *What's That Flower?* is a field guide to the common wildflowers of the Eastern U.S from DK Books. Mr. Edmondson's inspirational effect can be gathered from the fact that in 2008 The Wilderness Society honored him with a *Faces in Conservation Award* for his wildlife photography; In 2010 the Seattle YMCA established *The Dudley Edmondson Fellowship in Youth Development and Education* in his honor, offering youth of color 15 months of paid study to learn leadership and life skills' and in 2012 the Secretary of the Interior named him a Federal Migratory Birding Hunting and Conservation Duck Stamp Judge. This once in a life time honor is the only art competition sponsored by the U.S Government.

Recently he became part of DEL (Diverse Environmental Leaders Speaker Bureau) and travels around the country speaking to audiences about conservation and inclusion. He also works with youth of color through outdoor programs around the country.

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