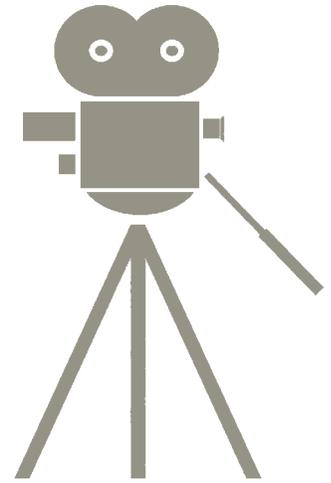


The Legacy of UEL GARDNER



FAMED FISH AND GAME FILMMAKER WAS A PUBLIC OUTREACH PIONEER | BY DANIEL FERGUSON

Over the course of a three-day firearms safety clinic in March 1954 in Durham, N.H., participants were treated to the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department's newest gun safety film, *Death Is a Careless Hunter*. Outdoor leisure activities had grown in popularity after World War II, and Fish and Game's film promoted hunter responsibility against the backdrop of an influx of hunting accidents as more people took to the outdoors.

On a spring day in May 1956, Cub Scout Pack 314 gathered at the Old Parsonage building in Newington, N.H. The young outdoorsmen were there to learn about the state's native birds and animals by viewing the Department's film, *Spying on New Hampshire Wildlife*.

Across New Hampshire throughout the late 1940s, 50s and 60s, eager outdoor enthusiasts flocked to community centers, clubs and schools to view films produced by New Hampshire's foremost conservation organization, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. Fish and Game's photographer and filmmaker, Uel Gardner worked behind the lens, producing these popular films. As a result, the Department would become a more recognizable brand and the public gained knowledge about wildlife, conservation and safety. Uel Gardner directed that narrative.

TALENTED PHOTO-TECHNICIAN

After 1945, it was time to "catch up with the backlog of necessary work which had been postponed" during the war years, according to the Department's *1948 Biennial Report*. Wartime freezes on funding programs like Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration were lifted and an increased budget allowed N.H. Fish and Game to begin reinstating projects and programs. Fish and Game

recognized that "throughout the country progressive game departments now believe they must undertake a share in the job of providing sound conservation education for both adults and youngsters, if wildlife resources are to last for the future." Always a leader in conservation outreach, in 1946 the Fish and Game Department established an Education Division (predecessor to today's Public Affairs Division) which included the hiring of a talented photographer to help bring Department messages to the public.

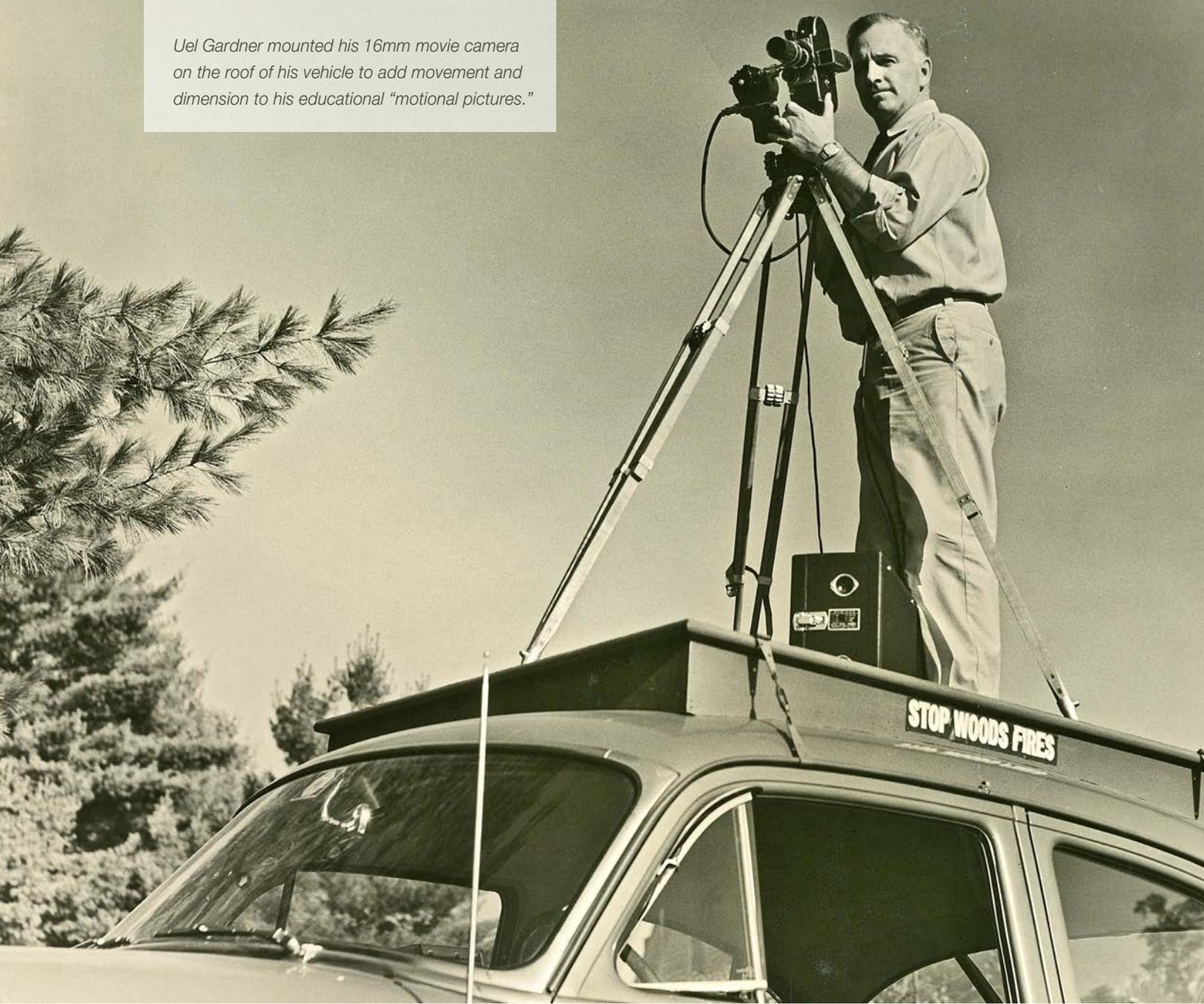
Uel A. Gardner joined the new Education Division in 1946, providing "full-time services" as "an experienced photo-technician." Because of a limited division budget, a film studio could not be built at Department headquarters, so Gardner worked out of a studio in his home in Farmington, N.H.

"When I went to work for Fish and Game in June 1949, the Education Division consisted of conservation educator John E. Dodge, photographer Uel Gardner and me as division secretary," recalled friend and co-worker Patricia Fleurie.

From 1949 to 1967, Uel Gardner captured the Department's activities for print use in biennial reports, media publications and at lectures. He documented the daily work of dedicated employees – everything from fish and pheasant stocking to construction operations, hunter safety classes, research studies and personnel photographs.

"Uel took hundreds of photos documenting the Department's various projects, programs and personnel, as well as photos of wildlife. The latter often required hours of time spent in blinds," said Fleurie. Uel Gardner traveled New Hampshire's varied landscapes to capture some of the Department's most iconic images – a job that required a great amount of dedication and an artist's eye.

Uel Gardner mounted his 16mm movie camera on the roof of his vehicle to add movement and dimension to his educational "motional pictures."



Gardner, far left, films a simulated death scene for Fish and Game's gun safety film, *Death Is a Careless Hunter*.



Gardner works on post-production for one of the Department's films in his cinema production studio in Farmington, N.H.

MAKING MOVING PICTURES

Gardner also produced the Department's earliest educational "16mm motional pictures," documenting wildlife management techniques and educating new hunters about safety. His films would be circulated to sporting clubs, schools and other organizations.

Today, Fish and Game media can be uploaded to the Internet and distributed to mass audiences with the click of a button. During Uel Gardner's career, films had to be either purchased or loaned through the Department's circulating film library, which Gardner managed. Fleurie remembered Gardner's films being "extremely popular" and "constantly in circulation." His films were often purchased or loaned to organizations throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Sixty years ago, producing a film was a laborious process.

To record his footage, Gardner used a Bolex spring-loaded camera shooting 16mm film. Unlike with modern digital cameras and video cards, Gardner "never knew what he had until the film was processed," explained Jason Philippy, who now fills Gardner's role as the Department's broadcast media specialist.

After filming, a work print, or copy of the raw footage, was made from the original camera negative. Using a guillotine-type film splicer, Gardner would cut the workprint, discard the frames not used, arrange the selected frames into what would become the film sequence, and tape or splice it together. If audio was involved, the tape recording was transferred to magnetic film and synchronized with the workprint. Next the workprint was sent out to a third party and conformed to the original negative with an optical audio



Gardner's photographic documentation of the Department's work covered everything from recreational fishing to hunter safety instruction, wildlife management and conservation camp activities.





Today Jason Philippy is Fish and Game's broadcast media specialist, producing the television show *New Hampshire's Wild Side* as well as informational videos for the department's YouTube channel and a weekly radio program called *Outdoor Almanac*. Check it out at wildnh.com/multimedia

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track, creating a film ready for showing.

The process was lengthy compared to what's possible today. "I can upload the video cards when I get back to the office, edit the video on a computer and put a film on YouTube or Facebook and it can be seen by thousands of people that day," Philippy said. Uel Gardner needed to take a more deliberate approach. In Gardner's day, processing film was time-consuming and expensive. Consequently, he devoted considerable time in pre-production, creating the storyboard, writing the script and setting up the scene.

During Gardner's twenty years with Fish and Game, on average, just 2.5% of the Department's yearly budget was allocated to the Education Division, paying for newsletters, education programs and audio-visuals. (Today, even with expanded education programs and diverse media outlets, Public Affairs activities account for just 6% of Fish and Game expenditures.) Gardner had to be judicious in his filming process – quite simply, he couldn't afford too many reshoots. His style proved effective. The work he produced was widely recognized as being of the highest standard.

Gardner-produced films such as *Spying on N.H. Wildlife* (1954), *Nature's Choice* (1962) and *Golden Trout* (1962) provided behind-the-scenes looks at New Hampshire's wildlife. Rising concern about hunter safety was a catalyst for *Death is a Careless Hunter* (1954), *Tomorrow We Hunt* (1955) and *Muzzleshy* (1957). For his work on *Tomorrow We Hunt*, Gardner won the 1956 Award of Merit from the National Committee for Films on Safety.

Gardner's most unique film, *Muzzleshy* was a collaborative effort with internationally renowned master puppeteer and Dartmouth College professor Basil Milovsoroff. The professor created the scenes and the famous crow puppets – "the most gun-conscious bird that flies," joked the September 24, 1957, edition of the *Fish and Game Newsletter* – to star in Gardner's story about the dangers of the careless handling of firearms. The Department described the firearm safety film as an "all out bid for maximum understanding and acceptance of its precepts...By eliminating overtones, confusions, and mental blocks inevitable where human characters are involved in accidents." The success of the film was evident, with fifty copies purchased in the first two years.

MEDIA THROUGH TODAY'S LENS

Uel Gardner left the Department in 1964. Following his departure, the film program was discontinued until 1970, when Jon Craig Cloutier once again produced films, including the popular *Snow Revolution*. Budget cuts in the mid-1970s cost the Department its film production operation. Not until 1991 would Fish and Game take video cameras back into New Hampshire's forests. At the helm of the Department's media revitalization in the 1990s was Jon Charpentier, who was tasked with providing "information and outreach to the masses." During his tenure, the Fish and Game Department produced the popular television show *Wildlife Journal*, in collaboration with New Hampshire Public Television, from 2002-2007.

Now the Chief of the Public Affairs Division, Charpentier is a witness to the power of media to stir public involvement to help ensure a lasting future for New Hampshire's wildlife. "Broadcast media is an important voice for the Department, allowing people to see what we do and encouraging them to get outdoors," said Charpentier.

Today, Philippy produces *New Hampshire's Wild Side*, a television program about hunting and fishing in New Hampshire that airs on WBIN-TV, and *Granite State Outdoors*, featured on local community access channels. Fish and Game also operates its own social media pages, including a YouTube channel. The Department's weekly radio show *Outdoor Almanac* is heard on stations across the state.

In our increasingly "plugged in" world, access to information is more readily available than ever before. Maintaining the Department's legacy of conservation education and awareness will require traditional outreach and more. For example, outdoor enthusiasts can now find fishable waterbodies and places to hunt – or watch Fish and Game videos – on the Department's mobile-friendly website.

At its core, the work of informing the public about Fish and Game remains much the same as it was when Uel Gardner roamed New Hampshire's forests. "The story, the research or activity you're filming, plus the care and love Fish and Game employees have for the work they're doing hasn't changed much," said Philippy. "The technology may be more advanced, allowing for quicker turnaround of a finished product, and there are more distribution channels, but the goal is the same – to educate the public about New Hampshire's wildlife and recreational opportunities and the people that help manage it."

Media continues to be an effective tool to help Fish and Game engage the public in that wildlife conversation. And the Department will charge ahead in this digital age to get that message out any way it can. Uel Gardner would be proud.



Historical consultant and author Daniel Ferguson completed extensive research in the Fish and Game archives to develop outreach materials for N.H. Fish and Game's 150th anniversary.

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Watch a clip of a Uel Gardner production and learn more about Fish and Game history at wildnh.com/150.

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