

A look at dynamic cinematographer Elam Stoltzfus



A view of Western Lake by Elam Stoltzfus.

Documenting the art of nature

Living in the Florida Panhandle, appreciation of the natural beauty that surrounds us comes easy. With beautiful beaches, wetlands, rivers and unique coastal dune lakes- the area abounds with Mother Nature's gifts.

If one is offered the unique opportunity to document the beauty of nature as an occupation, well, it probably doesn't get any closer to having the perfect career.

I had the opportunity recently to meet such a person - local, award winning cinematographer, Elam Stoltzfus.



Elam at work at Western Lake expanding his coastal dune lake documentary. Lori Ceier/Walton Outdoors

As the mastermind cinematographer and producer behind Live Oak Production Group, Elam and his company create educational documentaries on Florida's natural resources. Skillfully using his high definition video camera as a paintbrush, Elam creates stunning work.

Elam started from humble beginnings, growing up on a farm in Eastern Pennsylvania, where being a part of the outdoors was typical day-to-day activity.

"Being outdoors was just an everyday experience on the farm, the creeks and woods and connecting with the soil was a part of life," Elam explained.

Elam's father instilled an appreciation for the environment early on. By experimenting with minimal use of chemicals in farming methods, Elam's father hoped to lessen the negative impact on the environment. Learning how to use less and still manage a farm successfully was risky business back in the 1970s, as there was not much documented success.

After graduating from Florida State University with a Bachelor of Science degree with a major in communications/media, Elam utilized his talents to create Live Oak Production Group. It turned out to be a good choice, as his success is evident in the quality work he has created to date.

Live Oak Production Group produced a beautiful coastal dune lake video in a partnership with the Walton County Tourist Development Council. This film short delicately describes our extraordinary coastal dune lake systems.

Other local projects include a piece on the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center <http://www.liveoakproductiongroup.com/htmls/Nokuse.html> and the Apalachicola River, www.apalachicolaamericantreasure.com which Elam created with famed south Florida photographer Clyde Butcher.

Since 1989 Elam has worked with Clyde Butcher on numerous projects and credits Clyde with teaching him how to transcend the art of nature into film. It appears to be a perfect match, as the two have garnered several national awards and nominations for their work.

Currently Elam and Clyde are wrapping up an hour long documentary on the Big Cypress Swamp, slated for PBS in September. For more information on “Big Cypress Swamp: Western Everglades” go to: www.bigcypressswamp.org To see the video trailer, go to: www.bigcypressswamp.org/trailers.html

Elam is also currently working on expanding the coastal dune lakes video into an hour-long documentary.

Elam lives in Blountstown with his wife Esther. They have two children, Nick who is in his first year at FSU, and a daughter Laura in 11th grade.

For more information about Elam Stoltzfus and the Live Oak Production Group, go to www.liveoakproductiongroup.com.