

# Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame



Owen Gromme  
Inducted, 1994



*“He is a phenomenal man and outstanding artist; there is no question in anyone’s mind that Owen Gromme is one of the greatest wildlife painters of all time.”*

## Facts

About  
Owen Gromme

Known as “dean of U.S. wildlife artists”

Worked in birds and mammals department of Milwaukee Public Museum

Master artist at Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum in Wausau

Called for waterfowl seasons and bag limits

Used his influence to raise millions for conservation causes

## Owen Gromme 1896-1991

The quote above is from former Ducks

Unlimited Executive Secretary Ken McCreary. It could just as well have been spoken by thousands of Gromme admirers across the state of Wisconsin and the country. Gromme is credited with being the “dean of U.S. wildlife artists.” He was prolific yet demanding of himself. He spent 20 years working on his book, “Birds of Wisconsin,” a pictorial representation of all birds known to live in Wisconsin.

A native of Fond du Lac, Gromme spent his childhood in the marshes and forest of east-central Wisconsin, surrounded by abundant wildlife.

His first professional job was as a taxidermist at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. Later, after serving in World War I, he went to work at the Milwaukee Public Museum, where he was curator of birds and mammals.

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## About Wisconsin's Conservation Hall of Fame

### Location:

Schmeckle Reserve  
Stevens Point, Wis.

### Attractions:

Displays and information on Wisconsin's conservation history and leaders. Schmeckle Reserve, owned by the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point, provides hiking and wildlife viewing opportunities.

### Purpose:

To educate and inspire people with information about how resource conservation has shaped our environment and our lives.

### Hours:

M-F, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Sat: Noon - 4 p.m.  
Sun: Noon - 4 p.m.

**Support:** The Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame is funded solely by contributions.

Donations are tax deductible and may be sent to:  
WCHF Foundation Inc.,  
Schmeckle Reserve,  
UW-Stevens Point,  
Stevens Point, Wis. 54481,  
715-346-4992.

## Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame

### Honoring our state's rich conservation history

### Owen Gromme

(continued)

He became head of the department and stayed on until retiring in 1965. That set the stage for two more decades of work, for an artist never really retires. Nor does one who is imbued with the conservation ethic, and Gromme was that kind of person.

He understood how important conservation education and public support were to the environmental cause.

Gromme was fearless when it came to speaking out about issues, as in the 1930s, when he pushed for a closed season on ducks, bag limits on geese and other environmental legislation. He worked with [Aldo Leopold](#) to influence legislation that would protect herons, hawks and owls. His networking and organizing skills were strong. He played an important role in helping to stave off efforts to drain the Horicon Marsh. He was among the founders of the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo.

Gromme was heavily involved in observing and collecting specimens for the museum, and he had a keen eye for noting environmental concerns. He was one of the first to notice the scarcity of birds of prey and warblers, and learned that this was due to chemicals being used to fight Dutch elm disease. Long before Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring," Gromme was crusading against pesticide misuse.