



**Wisconsin
Conservation
Hall of Fame**

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New Leaf

Newsletter of the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Challenges and Inspirations

These are challenging times for all conservationists and environmentalists. (Is there a difference?)

Worldwide, we are seeing a variety of impacts from climate change, many of them little understood. Drought in some countries, floods in others. We see continued population growth, ongoing deforestation, declining marine fisheries – the list goes on and on. Almost overwhelming!

Here in Wisconsin, we face many of these same challenges, but on a scale that is easier to get our arms around. What we do about them here at home may seem small and insignificant, but if everyone did it, we would begin to chip away at the big picture.

This spring, we will induct three individuals who have done more than their share of chipping away. Two inductees did so in part as professionals, the other as a hardworking volunteer. You can read about them here in *New Leaf*, but we hope you will help us recognize their accomplishments by attending the April 24th ceremony in Stevens Point. You can also acknowledge their efforts, and those of past inductees, by supporting the work of the Hall of Fame.

Of course, you can also make your own contributions to conservation causes. Wisconsin has a large array of non-profit groups working on environmental issues of all kinds, locally, regionally, and statewide. Most of them welcome your volunteer time and energy, and I don't know of any that won't accept your money!

Why not let Emily, Ruth, and George be your inspiration? Stop by the Schmeckle Reserve, walk through the Hall of Fame gallery and read about our inductees. Each played their own role in their own way. It has added up to huge progress and significant improvement in our overall environmental situation.

But there is more to do, and our inductees have set good examples for us all to follow. I look forward to seeing you on April 24th.

– Gene Roark, WCHF President



George Becker



Emily Earley



Ruth Hine

Becker, Earley, Hine are 2010 Inductees Ceremonies April 24 in Stevens Point

Two Madison women who blazed new conservation trails and a Stevens Point man who combined science and citizen activism will be inducted into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame this year.

George Becker, Emily Earley and Ruth Hine all worked tirelessly to conserve and protect Wisconsin's natural resources. The trio will join 66 other distinguished inductees to the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame in ceremonies at 10 a.m. Saturday, April 24, 2010, at the Sentry Theater in Stevens Point. There will be a luncheon following the ceremony.

Becker, a professor of biology at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, authored the massive "Fishes of Wisconsin," a 1,052-page volume that covered 157 fish species and was the first of its kind in the state and one of the first such comprehensive works in the nation. Becker, who died in 2002, was also known as an outspoken and sometimes contentious advocate for the environment.

Emily Earley has been active on a variety of conservation causes for five decades. She was one of the earliest members of the Wisconsin chapter of The Nature Conservancy and led efforts to establish its stewardship program for acquired lands.

Hine worked for four-plus decades as technical editor and writer for the Bureau of Research in the Department of Natural Resources. She oversaw publication of scores of research reports for the agency. She worked to raise awareness about conservation issues and is credited with drawing attention to endangered species in Wisconsin and the development of an endangered species program.

George Becker

A blend of scientist, teacher, scholar, and activist (he was also an accomplished musician), Becker left a rich legacy.

Born in 1917 in Milwaukee, he studied both the sciences and languages, served in the Army Signal Corps in World War II and taught and worked in administration at several Wisconsin high schools.

In 1957, he joined the biology faculty at the state college in Stevens Point, now the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. He remained on the faculty for more than two decades and earned numerous accolades, including professor emeritus status. He was the university's chief expert on fishes. Work on "Fishes of Wisconsin" began almost immediately upon his arrival in Stevens Point. There was no research money available, so the effort became a family affair,

with wife Sylvia and sons Kenneth, Dale and David joining him on fish seining outings across the state.

Writing of the book took three years, and the result was a work that detailed the status, distribution, habitat and biology of the state's fish species. He enlivened it with anecdotes and even a few fishing tips –

(Continued on page 2)

**Mark your calendars:
The 27th annual Induction
Ceremony will be held
Saturday, April 24, 2010
at Sentry Theater,
Stevens Point.
See you There!**

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2010 Inductees (continued from page 1)

overcoming the objections of the publisher – making it readable for fishers and scholars.

His scientific accomplishments also included development of a system to pinpoint the age and growth of fish by concentrating on grown rings in scales.

Becker was among the first to demand action to clean up the Wisconsin River, which was polluted by industrial and municipal dischargers. He took up the cause in the 1960s, when politicians, civic and business leaders opposed it as too costly. “We could see the decline in water quality during the fifties and sixties,” Becker wrote in an essay. “The river was brown and lacked its former clarity. It had a terrible odor. Massive fish kills were occurring, including a remnant sturgeon population. We were turning the river into a sewer, and I knew something had to be done.”

As president of the Citizens Natural Resources Association of Wisconsin from 1972-74, he interested fellow members in the issue, leading to creation of the Wisconsin River Restoration Committee, which he chaired. He proposed a sanitary authority for the entire river valley, including miles of pipes to haul polluted water to a sewage plant and return clean water to the river. He was mocked for proposing an effort of this scale, but continued to lobby for river cleanup.

The Restoration Committee raised funds to advocate for cleanup, testified at hearings, submitted numerous resolutions and petitions to various branches of government and published a report asking the U.S. attorney for the western district of Wisconsin to take action against polluters.

The federal Clean Water Act of 1972 spurred river cleanup, and Becker later wrote, “...everybody I talk to now says the Wisconsin River is in its best shape in memory.”

Becker tangled with the DNR over another water-related issue. He was an outspoken opponent of the agency’s plan to chemically treat the Tomorrow-Waupaca River basin to eliminate rough fish and improve conditions for trout. He contended it was too drastic a solution and would, among other things, wipe out rare species. He lost the battle and the project was carried out, but in time the DNR stopped using the technique in streams.

Becker was also an outspoken opponent of unchecked population growth and fought the use of nuclear power for energy.

Among his many admirers is Mike Dombeck, a former student and chief of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1990s. “Immersed in Washington, D.C.’s political landscape, I often quietly wondered what George would do,” Dombeck recalled. “Even in his later years, he kept in touch, cheering me on during conservation wins as did the entire Becker family, and encouraging me when I was down. I was honored to be treated like one of the family.”

Emily Earley

Friends and colleagues of Earley say she sets an example for citizen conservationists with

her spirited “can-do” attitude and infectious enthusiasm. She has generously supported conservation causes for several decades and is unafraid to ask others to do the same.

The native New Yorker moved to Madison with her husband, James, where she pursued a master’s degree and he a Ph.D. She raised three children before setting out on a professional career as program coordinator and editor of technical publications in the UW-Madison’s Institute for Environmental Studies. Stephen Born, a professor of environmental studies at UW-Madison, recalled that she coordinated environmental programs and “was also the stickler editor of the institute’s technical publications – always interested in assuring that science was shared accurately and clearly.”

The list of conservation groups she supported is long, but she was partial to The Nature Conservancy. She joined the board of trustees of the new Wisconsin chapter of TNC in 1964 and has remained active since then. “I got to go out and work on sites. I wasn’t a scientist, but I knew scientists, and I could get them to help me,” she said.

She encouraged the Wisconsin chapter to be more active in managing land it acquired. “The Nature Conservancy’s initial direction and guidance for land stewardship – now a well-established and critical program – came from Emily,” said State Director Mary Jean Huston. “She realized that without active management, many of the natural values that The Nature Conservancy preserves were established to protect could be lost.”

Earley chaired the chapter’s Stewardship Committee, setting up subcommittees for each preserve and organizing volunteer work parties to accomplish land management. She also pressed the group to devote more funds to stewardship. In 1982, trustees voted to raise an amount equal to 25 percent of each land acquisition to fund stewardship for the property. She also lobbied successfully for paid stewardship staff.

Among her many other activities, Early was a founding board member of the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute, a public outreach program at Northland College in Ashland. She also served on the council of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters from 1979-83, successfully encouraging the organization to set up a small grants program to fund field research on plants, animals and natural communities.

She was a charter member of 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, a group that promotes wise land use. She has served on the board and as vice president of the Natural Heritage Land Trusts in Dane County and has been a longtime supporter of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum.

As a charter member of the Wisconsin Conservation Corps board, she served as the group’s environmental expert, helping assure that crews of young workers provided muscle for conservation projects across the state.

Friends and associates across the state offer

glowing praise for her work. They include Natural Resources Board member Jonathan Ela, who said: "It must be understood that when Emily commits herself to service for an organization, the service is never nominal.... When an organization acquires Emily as an asset, it acquires a package: leadership, intellectual stimulus, a prod for getting others to work harder, and a fund-raiser and donor."

Now in her 90s, Earley remains active on a variety of causes. "I meet all these young people on these boards. That's what keeps me going," she said.

Ruth Hine

Hine's work at the DNR left an indelible mark on Wisconsin conservation history. As editor and then chief of the Research and Public Information and Publications Section of the Bureau of Research, she oversaw the technical editing and writing of research reports from 1949-84. She also crossed over to the popular press to pen articles on natural resources topics for magazines and other publications.

It was a male-dominated field when Hine first began her duties. A 1959 *Milwaukee Journal* article about Hine proclaimed in a headline, "Woman finds place in conservation work." Many other women found a place, too, thanks in no small part to the excellence of Hine's work.

Hine told interviewers that her goal was to provide reports that appealed not only to researchers and scientists, but were also valued by administrators, policymakers and the general public.

She played a key role in development of the

state's endangered species program, volunteering to lead co-workers in studying the disappearance of species and chairing the committee that developed the state's first endangered species list. She sent out a call statewide for sightings of certain animals and set up a system for keeping records of the sightings. Her efforts led to the Legislature's establishment of the Bureau of Endangered Resources. She then worked to establish a foundation to support the endangered species program.

With her leadership, the DNR undertook annual frog surveys. Frogs, she noted, "were essentially overlooked. We didn't pay much attention to frogs." The importance of these amphibians as indicators of ecological health has since become well known.

In her endeavors, Hine was driven by a simple goal: "It was the desire to get more people interested in the outdoors and accept their responsibilities," she said in a 2009 Conservation Hall of Fame interview.

A Columbus, Ohio, native, she came to Wisconsin in the 1940s, hoping to study under Aldo Leopold at UW-Madison. Unable to do so, she instead earned a graduate degree in zoology and then a Ph.D. in zoology and wildlife management at UW-Madison in 1949. It was the first Ph.D. awarded to a woman by the university.

Cyril Kabot, former chief of research for the then-Conservation Department, gave her the opportunity in 1949 to pursue a career in what had been a man's world when he hired her as a conservation aide. In her years with the DNR, she helped hundreds of researchers turn out reports. She felt she needed first-hand experience to do that, so she took on roles as leader

of mouse and pathology projects, sought out rattlesnake dens, and worked on deer counts, waterfowl and prairie chicken bag checks and numerous other activities.

Back at the desk, she gave each manuscript careful attention. "Ruth's brilliance and modesty as an editor conceal her hard work, generosity and hour upon hour of preparation," said the late Frances Hamerstrom, another pioneering Wisconsin woman wildlife researcher. "Great editors get little credit in this world. Their gift is drawing others out to coerce them to produce the best that is in them - resulting in a top-notch publication."

Susi Nehls worked with Hine for 16 years as a DNR research information and publications specialist. "She must have edited over 400 reports, journal articles and bulletins," Nehls recalled. While most publications were about specific creatures and their management, Nehls noted that Hine saw a need for broader perspective. In response, she created a publication called "Wildlife, People and the Land" in 1961, describing the state's total natural community and its interrelationships.

As retirement neared, Hine took on a part-time job as a naturalist for Lutheran summer camps in Wisconsin. She also volunteered countless hours at Bethel Horizons environmental camp in Dodgeville, operated by Bethel Lutheran Church in Madison.

In a 1991 interview with the late writer George Vukelic, she talked about how her faith and views of nature were intertwined: "As a Christian, I look upon the world as a magnificent, living organism created by God and sustained by God. Human beings are part of that creation, part of nature, if you will."

Greetings! From our New Treasurer

You may be interested in knowing something about the new Treasurer for the WCHF Foundation. I arrived in Wisconsin five years ago when I became an Assistant Professor of Environmental Education and Interpretation in the College of Natural Resources at UWSP. I have served as the College representative for the WCHF Board of Directors for a couple of years. It is an honor to be part of such a reputable organization filled with individuals who are passionate about acknowledging the valuable contributions of the many Wisconsin conservationists from our past, present and future.

Along with your interest in Wisconsin conservation, I hope you will consider supporting the WCHF Foundation with your financial support by becoming an Affiliate Member.

What is an Affiliate Member? They are supporters of the Hall of Fame and are interested in the work of the organization. They offer their financial support and interest, but do not play a direct role in the deliberations of the Hall of Fame. If you choose to financially support the WCHF, you will automatically be listed as an Affiliate Member for the year in which you make a donation.

Consider renewing your membership today rather than waiting for the induction ceremony announcement. The Affiliate membership is currently fairly small and we would like to increase the size to form an important support group for the Hall of Fame. Please send your donation to the address below. Thank You!

— Brenda Lackey, Treasurer

Thank You Peter Muto

At the last Board of Director's meeting, the Board reluctantly accepted Peter Muto's resignation as Treasurer. Peter was Treasurer for more years than either of us cares to count. His efforts to keep us on a financial even keel have been important in making sure that we continue to do the job of recognizing conservation leaders in the State and Nation.

During his tenure, Pete brought discipline to our budget, and kept us constantly aware of the need to maintain a healthy cash position. We thank you, Pete for all your work keeping us honest, and wish you the best as you move on to new opportunities.

— Earl Spangenberg, Executive Secretary

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE
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*This news release is also
available on the web at
www.wchf.org*

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— Member Organization Profile —

Citizens Natural Resources Association

CNRA, founded in 1951, is one of Wisconsin's oldest conservation organizations. Its leaders have been some of the state's most recognizable conservationists, with ten of its members inducted into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame. Three additional CNRA members will be inducted this spring: Professor George Becker, CNRA president from 1972-1974, Ruth Hine, awarded CNRA's Silver Acorn in 1974, and Emily Early, a long-time supporter.

In CNRA's long history, it has been recognized as initiating action to ban DDT in Wisconsin, protecting Wisconsin's rivers and wetlands, promoting natural roadsides and working to sus-

tain the wildlife refuge status of Horicon Marsh. Recent activities focus on support for local issues, other conservation organizations and environmental education. In the past two years, CNRA funded an outdoor lab for the River Crossing Environmental School and a grant program for Prairie Biotic Research conducting prairie studies in nine Midwestern states. It also funded a program to remove invasive plants at Bubolz Nature Preserve in Appleton and provided a portion of the match for a state aquatic invasive species grant for the Winnebago Lakes Council. On an ongoing basis, it continues to monitor Horicon Marsh through awareness of potential impacts to this fragile ecosystem

Become part of Wisconsin's conservation history by contributing to the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame Foundation with your membership.

Help commemorate those who labored in years past to ensure the future of Wisconsin's abundant and diverse natural resources. Keep alive the ideas and ideas of those who foresight preserved our environment.

My tax-deductible donation is enclosed:

- Sponsor (\$25)
- Supporting (\$50)
- Sustaining (\$100)
- Patron (\$500)
- Benefactor (\$1,000 or more)

Thank you!

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Mailing address _____

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Please enclose check (see membership levels at left) and mail to:

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