

Woman Finds Place in Conservation Work

By Marilyn Gardner

Of The Journal Staff

MADISON, Wis.—On the inside leaf of many publications published by the Wisconsin conservation department is a modest credit line: Edited by Ruth L. Hine.

The subject of this acknowledgment is a pretty, brown haired young woman with a friendly, unpretentious manner and an obvious enthusiasm for both her work and the outdoors.

As editor of research publications in the conservation department's information and education division, Ruth Hine is a kind of "middle man" between the natural science specialists and the general public.

"The public, of course, includes a lot of people," she explained. "It might be Joe Blow, a hunter, who reads our bulletins because hunting is his hobby. Or, it might be an administrator of another state's conservation department."

Consequently, the pamphlets and bulletins carrying reports of research done by the department's scientists must be easy to read, so the average sportsman can understand them, yet thorough and accurate, so the expert can learn from them.

No Happy Accident

This combination is often a tricky one to achieve, Ruth admitted candidly. In a sense, I'm a sounding board. I read the manuscript very carefully, and, if I can't understand it, I don't think any average reader will either." In this case, both she and the manuscript go to the author for clarification.

Accuracy is a constant worry for Ruth, just as it is for any writer or editor. She works on a manuscript for about three months, reading and studying it, checking and double checking, planning the layout and presentation. Then, off it goes to the printer.

Three months later, when the completed booklet is put on her desk, clean and fresh from the printer, she regards it with mixed emotions.

"It's wonderful to see the finished product," she said, "and it's fun to see how everything turned out. On the other hand, I dread opening and reading it."

The material has been painstakingly checked and rechecked, she knows, "but mistakes can creep in. Oh, and if the phone rings—"Say, Ruth, on page so and so, it should be . . ." She shuddered in horror at the thought.

Interests Outdoors

Ruth isn't quite sure herself what prompted her interest in conservation or just when she decided upon a career in some phase of natural history.

"I guess I've always just loved the out of doors and wanted to do something about it," she said simply.

As a child, though, she was an inveterate explorer and collector, she remembered. "I always had bugs and birds' nests around and used to come home with my pockets

drives, none of them was a "real outdoor type," she said.

Her childhood heroes, though, were naturalists like Enos Mills and John Muir. "I would copy passages out of their books and memorize them," she remembered.

"And, I'll never forget one book I read as a child. It was called 'Canoe Country' and was written by a husband and wife team who had taken a canoe trip up in Canada. They

were in the real wilds where there were only loons and deer. I remember pouring over that book by the hour and dreaming of taking a trip like that. And, do you know, I'm going to do it someday."

Decided on Zoology

She decided on her career while she was a high school student. "I liked biology and zoology. And, I got my best

grades in them." Although she is a native of Columbus, Ohio, her family had moved to Springfield, Conn., when she was a young girl, and she went to Connecticut college, New London, majoring in zoology.

After her graduation, she worked as a research assistant for a biology professor at Wesleyan university, Middletown, Conn. "I was there for two years, helping with a study of cell development and genetics."

In 1946, she decided to study for her Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin. Her major was zoology with minors in wildlife management and botany.

"I hate to admit it," she said with a laugh, "but I did not finish my degree until 1952." The reason was simple—she worked to pay her own way. Her first job was as an assistant instructor at

the university and, in 1949, she began working for the conservation department.

Trapped Her Thesis

Writing her thesis for her degree holds vivid memories for Ruth. "I wrote on small mammal communities," she explained, "and in the process, set some 1,800 mouse traps."

Field mice were among the small mammals she studied to determine changes in their population over a four year period. To do this, she set mouse traps in the fields and forest which make up the university's arboretum.

She would set the traps at dusk, she explained, putting out a line of about 50 traps and baiting each one with a tempting dab of peanut butter. At dawn the next day, she returned to the arboretum to see what the night's catch had been.

This process was repeated for three consecutive days, then Ruth waited a few weeks, and started over for three days.

"Eventually, you had a fine index of the field mouse pop-

Turn to page 17



Reference books on natural history fill the book shelves of Ruth L. Hine's small office, "so I can reach right over and get whatever I need." As editor of research publications for the Wisconsin conservation department, her work is divided between editing technical bulletins containing results of the department's research and putting out "The Conservationist," a

monthly newspaper for the department's staff. While the conservation field is a large one, Miss Hine frankly feels that "most of the work is men's work." If a woman does have a talent for natural history, though, "she should figure out some way she can use it," she advised. Her own job, for instance, is "a hybrid of journalism and zoology."

—Journal Staff

and forestry—instead of just one. As you can imagine, I'm learning all the time."

In addition she edits the Conservationist, a small newspaper which serves as a "kind of house organ" for the entire conservation department and helps spread news and information amid the staff.

The importance of getting the results of the department's research into print and before the general public cannot be underestimated, Ruth said earnestly. "People need to understand research and its function," she said.

"It's all pointed toward management of our resources. These fellows in the field spend months and years doing the work, and it's tremendously important."

Brings Research Together

Generally, she has two goals, she said. "First, I try to make their work known and understood. Second, I try to show how all phases of conservation work together, how one division's work affects another's."

She reached into the bookcase behind her desk. "Here's a good example," and she brought forth a booklet entitled "Noxious Weed Control and Brush Management in Wisconsin."

"This booklet was put out by several agencies, all working together. The conservation department was involved, but so was the highway department and the department of agriculture. In years past each agency might have gone out on its own. But some give and take is vital, for the problem is a general one which affects more than just one division or agency."

Qualifies Woman's Place

While Ruth loves the out of doors as much now as she did when she was a child, she is realistic enough not to yearn for a job in the field. "I don't think women are equipped physically to do the field work," she said. "It's just too hard."

There is, however, plenty of opportunity for women in conservation work, she believes. "My feeling is that



Silent appreciation is not enough. Make a point of saying "thank you" promptly when someone goes out of his way to do something for you.

women should combine their bent for natural history with an outlet for their ability. In my case it's been a hybrid of journalism and zoology, and I think it's worked out fine."

Although most of her work is done in a small office lined

with reference books and literature, Ruth frequently makes trips into the state on literary errands. "If I want to go over a manuscript, I usually go out to see who ever wrote it. It's better, anyway, for then I get a better feeling of the material."

Her family now lives in Florida, she said, so her vacations usually are planned for winter visits with them.

She is able to do some hunting, though, she said, "although I'm still awfully green. But the fellows are very patient and put up with me. I shot my first duck last year."

And someday, she thinks, she will try her hand at fishing. "I'm sure I'd like it, but I don't have the equipment. Now, the only fishing I've done is with a bent pin and a bamboo pole." She paused and laughed, "and I'm not sure I even have the pole any more."

Appetite Ups, Downs Reflect General Health

DOCTORS keep a weather eye on your appetite just as a fisherman watches his barometer. For doctors recognize the ups and downs of appetite as a barometric reading to predict health.

Researchers say that drastically restricting food to the point of near starvation results in an almost complete loss of appetite . . . a serious fall in the appetite barometer. This warns dieters. Although appetite may cease to be a nagging nuisance, drastic reducing regimens cannot provide the nutrients they need. Even dieters on well balanced reducing diets often find that they do not lose as rapidly as they would like, because the body adjusts to less food and conserves its energy when calories are restricted.

Keeping a steady appetite reading on a safe, no nuisance level is under your control. If you keep physically active, chances are your appetite will match the food you eat.

Conservation Work

From page 14

ulation," she said. "In spring, I might get 10 mice from three nights of trapping. In summer, there might be 18, and in the fall, 55 or 60. Over a four year period, you got a real curve."

Learns Through Editing

While her work today is less active than this, the study has been a real help. "It gave me a real basis for

understanding population problems of all kinds of animals."

When Ruth first began work at the conservation department, she did publications work for the game division. "They had a lot of manuscripts and no one with time enough to work on them."

About a year ago she was transferred to her present job. "It's much the same type of work, but I work mainly with three divisions—game, fish

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