



Ruth Hine
1923-2010

“It’s only after being aware of what’s around us that we develop an understanding of what nature is like. This understanding brings love, which in turn makes one realize that each of us can help take care of the earth.”

--Ruth Hine

Ruth Hine Conservation Hall of Fame Biography, September 2009

Ruth Hine's contribution to Wisconsin's conservation legacy is no less remarkable for the fact that much of her work was done quietly, out of view of the citizens she served. A review of her life accomplishments shows she left an indelible and important mark on Wisconsin conservation history.

Hine worked for four-plus decades as a technical editor in the research bureau of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and its predecessor, the Wisconsin Conservation Department. She rose to the position of chief of the Research Information and Publications Section of the Bureau of Research with the DNR. Hine's list of tasks also included chairing committees and raising public awareness about conservation issues. But the bulk of her work included technical editing and writing of scores of research reports for the DNR. Those who benefited from her expertise include researchers whose work she shepherded, scientists in Wisconsin and beyond, administrators and policymakers, and, of course, the general public.

The research bureau achieved international acclaim for its work, but Ruth Hine remained humble and unassuming.

"It is not without significance that all of Wisconsin's blue-ribbon monographs have been edited by the incomparable Ruth Hine, who has the unique ability to combine a PhD in zoology with a felicity of expression," said the Wisconsin State Journal of Madison in 1966. The newspaper article focused on honors received by Wisconsin Conservation Department monographs written by various authors. One of them was recognized by The Wildlife Society in 1966 as "the best conservation monograph in the country in the past 10 years."

Important as her contributions in the Research Bureau were, Hine made other significant conservation impacts in Wisconsin. While she didn't necessarily set out to do so, Hine also opened doors for many other women in science and conservation, fields that had been dominated by men for decades. As a 1959 Milwaukee Journal article on 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 her work.

In addition to editing and writing, some highlights of her other accomplishments include the following:

Hine played a key role in developing the Wisconsin endangered species program, leading co-workers in studying the disappearance of Wisconsin species and chairing the committee that developed Wisconsin's first endangered species list. She kept endangered species issues in the public eye, leading to the Legislature's establishment of the Bureau of Endangered Resources. She also worked to establish a foundation to support the DNR's endangered species program.

With Hine's leadership, the DNR undertook annual frog surveys and a spruce grouse observation initiative. Frogs, she noted, "were essentially overlooked. We didn't pay any attention to frogs."ⁱ

The importance of these amphibians as indicators of ecological health has since become well-known worldwide.

In the 1980s, her interest in endangered resources led her to focus on prairie species and restoration of prairies. She became an authority on and advocated for re-establishing prairies and is credited with leading efforts to establish a number of prairie plantings found in southern Wisconsin today.

Her belief in the importance of protecting endangered species is captured in this quote: “It’s only after being aware of what’s around us that we develop an understanding of what nature is like. This understanding brings love, which in turn makes one realize that each of us can help take care of the earth.”ⁱⁱ

Hine’s love of nature combined with a deep faith, leading to volunteer and paid work that included serving as a part-time naturalist for the Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Outdoor Awareness and Earth Stewardship Programs. She also helped the program establish ecology and naturalist programs at nine camps. She donated countless hours to the Bethel Horizons Retreat Center and its nature program in Dodgeville. She helped to found the center and established the nature program, including a summer program bringing underprivileged children to the center. She prepared educational materials, trained volunteers and established prairie and wetland habitat restoration areas on the property.ⁱⁱⁱ

Hine has also been a longtime supporter of the University of Wisconsin Arboretum, assisting with programs and other activities and serving on its board of directors and as vice president. She also had leadership roles at the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters.

But her interest in two seemingly disparate fields, zoology and journalism, led her to a career as the first female professional in the Conservation Department, in the new field of wildlife management and research.

Born Aug. 19, 1923, in Columbus, Ohio, she moved with her family to New England and earned an undergraduate degree in zoology from Connecticut College. She came to Wisconsin to study under Aldo Leopold at the University of Wisconsin, but was unable to do so, instead earning a graduate degree in zoology with Professor John T. Emlen as her advisor. Emlen was a stickler for careful methodology in assembling field and laboratory data. That likely impacted Hine and carried over into her work overseeing research bulletins as she gently but firmly made sure the documents were accurate, on-message and accountable. Hine went on to earn a PhD in zoology and wildlife management at UW-Madison in 1949. It was the first PhD in zoology awarded to a woman by the university.

Her research focus was a study of small mammals of the Madison area, tracing the ups and downs of populations during the four seasons and in various environments. The UW Arboretum served as her outdoor laboratory, and she trapped and autopsied more than 1,800 mice over four years.

Cyril Kabot, former chief of research for the Conservation Department, gave her the opportunity to pursue a career in what had been a man's world when he hired her as a conservation aide. The rest was up to her, and from personal accounts of colleagues, she made the most of it. Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine called her "a team player extraordinaire."^{iv}

Frances Hamerstrom, another pioneering Wisconsin woman wildlife researcher and member of the Conservation Hall of Fame, said of Hine: "What every state needs is someone who combines the qualities of Saint Francis, girl Friday and a leader of men and women. The leadership is the tricky one: Ruth is so modest that most people don't realize they are being led."^v

Hamerstrom noted that helping hundreds of people turn out research reports required first-hand experience, so Hine took on roles as project leader of mouse and pathology projects, sought out rattlesnake dens, and worked on deer counts, waterfowl and prairie chicken bag checks, frog counts and numerous other field 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," Hamerstrom wrote in Wisconsin Natural Resources. "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."

As Hine neared retirement, Dick Thiel, a DNR wolf researcher said: "DNR will be badly off without Ruth. In fact, a lot of people are frantically trying to get research done and manuscripts in before she leaves."^{vi}

Susi Nehls worked with Hine for 16 years as a DNR research information and publications specialist. "(S)he must have edited over 400 reports, journal articles and bulletins," Nehls recalled in 1985.^{vii} "In the 1960s, most department publications were about specific creatures and their management. Ruth saw a need for a broader perspective. So, she helped create 'Wildlife, People and the Land.' Unique then as well as 25 years later, this publication describes Wisconsin's total natural community and its interrelationships."

One of the technical reports she edited, "Guidelines for Trout Stream Management," was reprinted numerous times and translated to German.

Department research publications often had broad audiences, ranging from natural science specialists and government bureaucrats to the general public. Hine described her role this way in a newspaper article: "I look on myself as a middleman between the research man and the public in the writing I do. "When I'm able to explain clearly to the layman the vital importance of the Conservation Department's work, I get tremendous satisfaction from my job."^{viii}

She took up to three months working over a manuscript, reading and studying, checking and double-checking, planning layout and presentation.

Hine also crossed over to popular writing and penned articles for Audubon magazine and various newspapers. She also gave numerous lectures and speeches to diverse audience and taught courses about natural resources.

Co-worker Nehls credits Hine for building the foundation for the department's endangered resources program. "In the early 1970s she volunteered to head a small group of co-workers concerned about Wisconsin animals which seemed to be disappearing," Nehls recalled in Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine. "Several years later she was named chair of a formal committee which came up with the first list of species endangered in Wisconsin."

Hine went a step farther, and sent out a call statewide for sightings of certain animals and set up a way to keep records of the sightings. "The Legislature had required the department to protect endangered species, but gave no funds to do this," Nehls recalled. "Ruth rose to the challenge, and found students who shared her enthusiasm and worked for little or nothing. This led to surveys on reptiles, amphibians, gulls, terns, mussels and wolves. Ruth's dedicated and special interest kept endangered species in the limelight until a separate department program – now the Bureau of Endangered Resources – was finally created, funded and staffed. "

Hine longed to spend more time in the outdoors she loved, and as her career at the DNR wound down, she took on a job as part-time naturalist for Lutheran summer camps in Wisconsin. She also volunteered countless hours at Bethel Horizons in Dodgeville, operated by Bethel Lutheran Church of Madison. In a 1991 interview with 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. I think it's very important for human beings to realize that we're part of the earth. We forget that sometimes. We set ourselves up above everything else, but we're just a part of the earth. We are animals."^{ix}

Hine's quiet and unassuming ways didn't escape notice. Colleagues note that she passed up job offers from elsewhere in the state and nation. She was rewarded with respect and recognition in Wisconsin. Included was the Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award in 1984 "For Exemplary Performance and Contribution to the Citizens of Wisconsin." Presenting the award, then-Gov. Anthony Earl said: "Her satisfaction has come from being a member of a team that is nationally recognized for its scientific achievements."

Hine also received the Gordon MacQuarrie Award for Outstanding Work in Conservation Journalism from the Gordon MacQuarrie Foundation. She was honored by the Citizens Natural Resources Association with its Silver Acorn Award. The National Parks and Conservation Association, The Wisconsin Chapter of the Wildlife Society and the Madison Audubon Society were among groups honoring her.

The awards are nice and fitting, but Hine was driven by something else. "It was the desire to get more people interested in the outdoors and accept their responsibilities," she said.^x

RUTH L. HINE

BIRTH: Aug. 19, 1923, Columbus, Ohio

EDUCATION: BA, Zoology, 1944, Connecticut College
Graduate courses, Wesleyan University, 1944-46
MA. Zoology, 1947, University of Wisconsin-Madison
PhD, Zoology and Wildlife Management, 1949, University of Wisconsin-Madison

BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY

PROFESSIONAL CAREER

1940-44, laboratory assistant in physiology, Connecticut College

1941, summer intern in invertebrate zoology, Marine Biological Station

1942, summer counselor, Audubon Nature Camp, Medomak, Maine

1944-46, research assistant, Zoology Department, Connecticut College

1946, research assistant, Department of Zoology, Wesleyan University

1946-1948, teaching assistant, Zoology Department, University of Wisconsin-Madison

1948, summer research assistant, Bermuda Biological Station

1948-49, research assistant, Department of Wildlife Management, University of Wisconsin-Madison

1949-84, technical editor, Research Bureau, Conservation Department (later named Department of Natural Resources), state of Wisconsin

Chair, Natural Resources Endangered Species Committee (later Endangered Resources Program), Department of Natural Resources

1984-85, naturalist, (half-time), Outdoor Awareness & Earth Stewardship Programs, Lutheran Outdoor Ministries

AUTHOR/EDITOR

Hundreds of research bulletins, reports and manuals for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

A sampling of scientific and popular publications edited and/or written by Ruth Hine:

“Out of the Classroom and Into the Woods,” Audubon Magazine

“Grassland Dynasty,” Audubon Society, 1951

“Is It Good to Eat?” Wisconsin Conservation Bulletin, 1955

“What’s a Missing Lynx to You?” Wisconsin Conservation Bulletin, 1974

“Wildlife, People and the Land,” DNR Publication No. 621, Madison, 1961

“Scientific Writing,” proceedings of the 1977 Symposium, “Rites of Writing,” University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, 1982

“Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey,” Wisconsin DNR, 1981

“Conservation Benefits Through Research,” Wisconsin Conservation, with James Hale and Lyle Christenson

“Endangered Animals in Wisconsin, with Supplementary Lists of Animals with Changing Status, Extirpated Animals, Uncommon Plants and Plant Communities,” 1973, Endangered Species Committee, Bureau of Endangered Resources, Wisconsin DNR

“Canada Goose Management: Current Continental Problems and Programs, A Symposium,” 1968, with C. Schoenfeld

“Parade of Plants: Wetlands, Upland Fields and Forests,” 1963, with George J. Knudsen, leaflet, Wisconsin Conservation Department, Madison

“Walter E. Scott, A Portrait in Words,” Wisconsin Academy Review, 1975

EDITOR’S NOTE: This abbreviated list of Ruth’s publications is meant to reflect the breadth of her work. There are hundreds more examples. A more complete list is kept in the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame archives at Schmeckle Reserve.

AWARDS/RECOGNITION

American Motors Conservation Award, 1962, “In recognition of exceptional service in the cause of conservation,” from American Motors Corp.

Gordon MacQuarrie Award, 1962, “For outstanding work in conservation journalism,” from the Gordon MacQuarrie Foundation

Commendation, 1964, “For outstanding and enthusiastic leadership...of the Wisconsin chapter,” from Soil Conservation Society

Fellow, 1968, “for service to the Soil Conservation Society through local chapter work and special publications,” Soil Conservation Society of America

Bureau of Research Award, 1974, “For excellence in research,” from Department of Natural Resources

Silver Acorn Award, 1974, “for outstanding effort and achievement in conservation work,” from the Citizens Natural Resources Association of Wisconsin

Stephen T. Mather Award, Midwest Region, 1984, “For outstanding contributions to the principles and practices of good stewardship of the natural and cultural resources of the United States

Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award, 1984, “for exemplary performance and contributions to the citizens of Wisconsin”

Wisconsin Award, 1985, “In recognition of exceptional contributions to the conservation of Wisconsin’s wildlife resources,” from The Wildlife Society, Wisconsin Chapter

Environmentalist of the Year, 1991, from the Madison Audubon Society

Hine Wetland is one of the named management units with Zeloski Marsh Unit of the Lake Mills Wildlife Area, Jefferson County, Wisconsin

ORGANIZATIONS—MEMBERSHIP/OFFICER OF

Adult Christian Education Foundation Board of Directors

Bethel Horizons Board of Directors

Bethel Lutheran Church (adult education teacher, Adult Christian Education Foundation Director, church council)

Bethel Horizons Board of Directors

Botanical Club

Conference of Biology Editors

Environment Wisconsin, co-organizer and vice chair

“First Friends,” Dane County Mental Health Association Board of Directors

Friends of the University Arboretum Board of Directors and vice-president

Madison Press Club, secretary

Mayor’s Goals for Madison Committee (Member, Pollution and Ecology)

Mississippi Flyway Council, chair of information and education committee

National Audubon Society

National Wildlife Federation

The Nature Conservancy, Wisconsin Chapter Board of Directors (newsletter editor)

North Central Audubon Council Board of Directors and president

Oakwood Village Long Range Planning Committee

Phenological Society

Phi Beta Kappa

Sierra Club

Soil Conservation Society of America (Wisconsin Chapter chair, vice-chair, secretary, newsletter editor) (National Special Publications Committee chair, Long Range Planning Committee)

The Wilderness Society

Wildlife Society (Bylaws Committee)

Wisconsin Academy of Sciences Arts and Letters (editor, Academy Review, vice-president, Long Range Planning Committee)

Wisconsin Committee for Environmental Information Board of Directors

Wisconsin Society of Professional Conservationists, secretary-treasurer

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

FOOTNOTES

ⁱ Conservation Hall of Fame interview, Sept. 14, 2009

ⁱⁱ "Update," a publication of the Oakwood Village retirement community where she lives in Madison.

ⁱⁱⁱ "Update" article

^{iv} "Wisconsin Natural Resources," November/December 1985

^v "Wisconsin Natural Resources," November/December 1985

^{vi} "Wisconsin Natural Resources," November/December 1985

^{vii} "Wisconsin Natural Resources," November/December 1985

^{viii} Milwaukee Journal article, date unknown

^{ix} "Isthmus," Aug. 30, 1991

^x Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame interview, Sept. 14, 2009

This biography prepared by Bill Berry, September 2009