

Conservationist's Plea: Let It Be

By Joy Krause
of The Journal Staff

Madison, Wis. — The world looks idyllically lovely from Ruth Hine's office high in the Department of Natural Resources tower here.

From the desk where she edits research reports and informational booklets for the department, Miss Hine can gaze across the lush treetops of residential Shorewood Hills to the distant Capitol and downtown.

"My claim to fame is my beautiful view," she said the other day as she enjoyed the sunlit landscape.

She was being modest. Earlier this summer it was announced that Ruth L. Hine, chief of the Department of Natural Resources Research Reporting Section, received the fifth annual Bureau of Research Award. It was in recognition of her outstanding performance in heading the state's endangered species programs and in her research reporting contributions.

Began in 1949

In a way, the view from her office symbolizes the kind of world she has worked toward since 1949, when she joined the Wisconsin Conservation Department, a predecessor to the DNR.

"I'm not anti-city but I'm not really pro-city either, so I love this view," she said, going on to discuss what she calls the total natural environment. She stressed how important it was for people to be aware of the totality of the outdoors and the relationship of its parts.

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— Journal Photo

Conservationist Ruth Hine works to protect vanishing species.

ship status in 1968, the Gordon MacQuarrie Award for Conservation Journalism in 1962 and the American Motors Conservation Award in 1963.

Her most recent award winning work on behalf of endangered species and her appointment as chairman of the Department of Natural Resources Endangered Species Committee are rather recent additions to her professional responsibilities.

Prepares Reports

Reports she edits as part of a series of technical bulletins are done by researchers. Each generally represents from two to four years of research, although one, on prairie chickens, covered 22 years of study, Miss Hine said.

She prepares about a dozen such reports annually, which encompass such fields as wildlife, fish, water resources, air and water pollution and solid waste disposal.

whole key is to help people understand. Maybe they'll care a little bit more about taking care of this gift of earth."

Two of her more popular leaflets are "Parade of Plants, and "Wildlife, People and the Land."

Even the technical research bulletins are edited and prepared for an audience that's broader than the scientific community. Publications must be lucid and concise, she said. They can be made readable through abstracting lengthy reports, pictures and captions.

Pictures abound in a popular and enlightening 1973 publication, "Endangered Animals in Wisconsin." Also included is a quote by the late Wisconsin conservationist Aldo Leopold that Miss Hine said was her philosophical base for endangered species programs: "Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them. Now we face the question whether a still higher standard of living is worth its cost in things natural, wild and free."

Her work for endangered species began informally in the early 1970s when a small group of concerned workers formed within the Bureau of Research. The group was unofficial, representing shared concerns about animals in trouble.

Establish List

Then, in 1972, the State Legislature passed a law requiring the Department of Natural Resources to estab-

lish a list of endangered species corner." Its walls bear pictures of species in trouble nationally, including the timber wolf, whooping crane and ocelot. A stark poster of a grizzly bear has a three word-message: "Let it be."

The phenomenon of vanishing animals has helped increase public concern for the environment, Miss Hine said. "When things begin to touch us personally we become more excited. If we're losing wildlife species something is happening to the environment that is going to touch us."

Her First Love

Miss Hine joined the former Conservation Department while finishing her doctoral thesis at the University of Wisconsin — Madison. A graduate of Connecticut College, New London, Conn., with a bachelor's degree in zoology, she continued her education at Wisconsin with master's and doctoral degrees. Her Ph.D. was in zoology with minors in botany and wildlife management.

At the time, her first love was field work but, she said, "The prospects for an out and out field job didn't look good for someone flat broke and hungry."

Also, she said, it wasn't so easy then for a woman biologist to get into wildlife work. Prospects have since improved for women, she said.

Two Fields She Liked

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Her efforts have won her a string of awards, including commendation from the Soil Conservation Society of America in 1964 and fellow-

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Right from her start with the former Conservation Department 25 years ago she helped prepare research reports and other publications.

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She prepares about a dozen such reports annually, which encompass such fields as wildlife, fish, water resources, air and water pollution and solid waste disposal.

Each year she also edits three or four informational bulletins for the general public because, she said, "the

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In response, a departmental Endangered Species Committee was officially set up with Miss Hine as chairman. With aid from public and private conservation interests in the state, the group produced a list of 15 endangered species later the same year.

[Included were mammals: marten, Canada lynx; birds: double crested cormorant, bald eagle, osprey; reptiles: ornate box turtle, queen snake, butler's garter snake, and fish: shortjaw cisco, longjaw cisco, shortnose cisco, kiyi, ozark minnow, pugnose shiner and greater redhorse.]

The Legislature also required the Department of Natural Resources to support special action to further protect endangered species. It funded neither endeavor, however.

Alert the Public

The committee of seven, representing various department bureaus has continued gathering information and alerting the public about the danger of actual and potential loss of species, Miss Hine said.

She described her role as catalyst and co-ordinator: "pushing and slipping and snipping at heels and thoroughly enjoying it."

She pointed out an area of her office she calls "my en-

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"But I can't second guess it now. I thought I wanted field work . . . then I tried to hook up two things I liked. The two were the natural world and journalism, a combination she said still remains somewhat uncommon. The result was a career.

Miss Hine said she had been untouched by an investigation of charges of mismanagement made against the Department of Natural Resources in a series of newspaper articles. The investigation is headed by law professor James MacDonald of the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

"I understand that other bureaus have been. It's a very trying time for some people, but there's work that has to go on."