

RUTH LOUISE HINE: TEAM PLAYER EXTRAORDINARY

FRANCES HAMERSTROM

DNR'S FIRST LADY WILDLIFE PRO RETIRES

Back in 1949 the Wisconsin Conservation Department (WCD) was a macho outfit. In DNR's predecessor agency no women worked at the professional level. WCD was dominated by an array of tough, competent, often colorful wardens, firefighters, foresters and fish hatchery people doing a "man's job." It was in this setting that Ruth Hine, who is now retiring, began a career in the new field of wildlife management and research. She was followed shortly by Fran Hamerstrom, researcher and author who wrote one of these remembrances. Together they paved the way for the more than 160 women environmental professionals who now work for DNR.

Ruth Hine: the first time I ever saw her she was playing baseball at a picnic. One tomboy is quick to size up another: I could run as fast as Ruth, and slide bases as well, but she had me beaten as a pitcher. She could throw a swift ball in an offhand way with that easy shoulder action common to a Milwaukee Brewer or a Chicago Cub.



INTEREST IN NATURE AT AN EARLY AGE.



RUTH WAS HEAD OF THE MOUSE PROJECT.

It is with that same sort of naturalness that she has influenced wildlife research and conservation in Wisconsin for over 35 years. Cy Kabat, former Chief of Research, had the gumption and perspicacity to hire Ruth as a conservation aide long before women were accepted in the wildlife profession.

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. This is teamwork of an exceptionally high order. She has worked with—and on—about 200 people getting out research reports—other people's reports—and each time she needed first hand experience, so: Dr. Hine has been Project Leader of the Mouse Project and of the Pathology Project. She has sought rattlesnake dens and worked (sometimes under

beastly conditions) on deer checks, waterfowl checks, prairie chicken bag checks, frog counts, coo counts (mourning doves coo), pheasant crowing counts, bobwhite whistling counts. And over and over again—especially in the early years—hunters and the general public watching her have chortled, “So they’ve got lady wardens now!”

Think of brushing off the lady warden remark and working with 200 researchers and learning each project well enough to be able to say, “That doesn’t quite seem to tie in with what you did last spring. Shall we be more precise here?”



AGING DEER WITH DNR SECRETARY C. D. “BUZZ” BESADNY WHEN THE SECRETARY WAS PART OF THE RESEARCH STAFF.

Just gentle questions. Ruth’s brilliance and modesty as an editor conceal her hard work, generosity and hour upon hour of preparation. 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. Ruth coaxes, teases, flatters, implores and nudges. Wisconsin biologists, a whole generation of them, have fallen under her spell.

There are really two kinds of editors: those that find every little nitty-picky mistake you’ve made and those who give wings—who make you grow and learn. Sometimes you’ll smart over mistakes, but falling into the hands of a great editor is a fantastic lesson in writing. Ruth loves to make

an author grow and get out of him what he didn’t know was there. (She worked mostly with men.)

Other organizations cast envious eyes on Wisconsin and tried to lure Ruth away. For example the Illinois Natural History Survey, the National Audubon Society and the State of Michigan tried. They failed, so Wisconsin is richer.

Dick Thiel, well known 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. Ruth just says, “If everybody did everything exactly right I



DR. HINE AND WOLF.

wouldn’t have had a job.” There’s more to it than that. Ruth orchestrates a concept, like the endangered species program, or an originally untidy manuscript to its publication with infinite care and tact—always striving for excellence. And besides, as Dick Vogt, author of “Natural History of Amphibians and Reptiles of Wisconsin” put it, “Ruth L. Hine took my rough drafts and scribbles and, with the patience of a snake trying to climb a glass wall, edited and re-edited until I was finally able to produce a readable text.”

This patience and persistence has paid off. Her work is internationally known and she has won many awards. As Governor Anthony Earl said, while presenting Dr. Hine with the

prestigious Virginia Hart Award, "Her satisfaction has come from being a member of a team that is nationally recognized for its scientific achievements."

Susi Nehls is a DNR research information and publications specialist and has worked with Dr. Hine for sixteen years.

THIRTY-SIX YEARS

SUSI NEHLS

When Ruth Hine began work with the Department in 1949, she was one of few women in the country who were professional conservationists with graduate degrees in natural science. (Fran Hamerstrom was another.)

During Ruth's editing/writing career of three plus decades, she must have edited over 400 reports, journal articles and bulletins. 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.

Of the many technical reports Ruth has edited, the number one best seller has been *Guidelines for Trout Stream Management*. Since its original publication in 1967, this report has been reprinted three times and has been published in German.

In addition to the far-flung reputation she has earned as a science editor, one of Ruth's biggest accomplishments was 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. Several years later she was named chair of a formal commit-

tee which came up with the first list of species endangered in Wisconsin.

Ruth then sent out a call for sightings of certain animals and set up a way to keep these records. The Legislature had required the Department to protect endangered species, but gave no funds to do this. 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.

Ruth always wanted to be more than an office biologist. So two years ago she went half-time in order to be traveling naturalist for Lutheran summer camps in Wisconsin. To this new work she has brought her usual energy and enthusiasm. She has shared with many her belief that outdoor awareness can lead to a love of the land that will touch our hearts, minds and actions.

Some think Ruth is retiring in January. She isn't. She won't be working for the Department any longer, but, as Fran Hamerstrom would say, "She'll be in there pitching." Ruth never retreats from life.



DR. HINE TODAY. WHEN SHE LEAVES DNR SHE'LL BECOME TRAVELING NATURALIST FOR LUTHERAN SUMMER CAMPS.