

In REMEMBRANCE

Honoring those who touched our lives, forged a connection to the natural world, or nurtured the flame



Beth Proescholdt May 13, 1922 — February 10, 2006

By Eugene and Eloise Armstrong

The Iowa Birding Community has lost its most avid raptor fan. She was a small bundle of pure joy and always a gracious and caring lady.

Her husband Carl and five children, plus nine grandchildren were her first love, but a close second came her love for birding. Especially warblers, thrushes and most important — raptors.

Of course, her pride and joy was the annual Grammar Grove Hawk Watch. Little did she dream it would last for 16 years. The Iowa River at that point has only about a 200 mile long watershed, but what astounding number and species have traversed it. There has been 33,318 raptors recorded during Hawk Watch Days. A total of 17 species have been seen.

One day there was six or seven

of us there when a Prairie Falcon came into view. Everyone was oohing and aahing, but when it was gone dear Beth said “I didn’t get on the bird,” How remorseful we felt for not realizing she wasn’t watching it too.

The day a Rough-legged Hawk came over Beth said “Ooh, I’d like to see that bird again,” and would you believe that it turned and circled back over us.

Each day a different raptor was her favorite bird or maybe even when a special one flew over.

On the day the Lady Bugs (Japanese Beetles) were extremely friendly Beth didn’t seem to mind because we were having such a good flight.

There was seldom a dull moment, as there was always a lot of good conversation. All the way from birds, family, politics, friends, butterflies, leaves and even cloud formations. Beth was a very knowledgeable lady. There were other birds to watch too, such as Pileated Woodpeckers, Winter Wren, Red-breasted Nuthatch, vireos, Pine Siskins, Golden-crowned Kinglets and a few warblers.

One of her highlights was the morning a Black Throated Blue Warbler appeared in the water pan at the end of their backyard

sidewalk. It visited for two or three days. Another of her highlights was a Painted Bunting that popped up beside the car as she was waiting for Mark while he walked the Arney Bend area. When he returned it couldn’t be relocated.

On the 26th of October 1997 we received eight inches of heavy wet snow. The next morning Eugene called Beth and told her we were coming up to hawk watch. Of course she thought he was crazy, “But what the heck,” she said. “All the birders are a little crazy.” She said she would be there. As we sat with our feet in the snow, would you believe we had 157 raptors. The most important being 72 Bald Eagles. Also three Golden Eagles, 69 Redtails, four Red-shouldered, two Roughleggeds and a few others. What a day!

Our 160 mile round trip to Grammar Grove always held the prospect of good birds to come and a day with Beth and sometimes Mark.

The year 2005 Beth recorded her record 310 Bald Eagles.

The past two years her health prevented her from being in Grammar Grove as much as she would have liked, but she was there with us in spirit, as she will always be. Yes, we will always remember Beth!

and was for many years a Mississippi Flyway representative.

In retirement, Art did not agree with the recent policy of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in maintaining liberal duck bag limits and season lengths, when many signs pointed to declining duck numbers. He believed in carefully husbanding our waterfowl, hunting them within more cautious, conservative limits. Top USFWS brass, on the other hand, have been inclined to manage waterfowl hunting as though they were merchants who must keep the most demanding customers satisfied, with generous regulations.

I was first introduced to Art when I was a writer for the fledging outdoor magazine Fins & Feathers, in the mid-1970’s. The magazine was one of the pioneers in bringing a substantial amount of relevant, timely, region- and state-specific information and features to Minnesota hunters, anglers and outdoor enthusiasts.

The publisher, and the magazine’s core of writers, including Art, were not just journalists who happened to enjoy the outdoors. They were natural resource professionals who felt a missionary purpose not just to entertain, but to inform and educate. Art’s specialty, of course, was sharing his knowledge of waterfowl.

After retiring from a 35-year career with the Fish & Wildlife Service, Art continued fighting for conservation causes. He helped organize Earth Day events, co-founded the Environmental Program in Churches organization, and served as an advisor to Pheasants Forever, the Aldo Leopold Foundation, the Minnesota DNR, and other groups.

Some of Art’s very last hours were spent observing ducks and geese on a marsh on the farm where he and his wife, Betty lived and raised three children. Like his mentor Aldo Leopold, Art died suddenly, blessed by being able to be active, involved and “sharp as a tack” right up to the time of his death.

Art’s challenge to those who care about his causes was suggested by his daughter, Amy, in the letter she sent announcing his death: “What he’d want is for us all to read Leopold’s ‘A Sand County Almanac’ again, and do the right thing for the land and the wetlands and the air we breathe.”

And, it goes without saying, not allow ourselves to be so busy with the concerns of our everyday lives, that we remain on the sidelines when there are important conservation skirmishes to be fought.

WOOD LAKE'S FLYING WILD BIRD FESTIVAL



SATURDAY, MAY 13 - BIRD HIKES START AT 6:00 AM
MAIN FESTIVAL - 9:00 AM-4:00 PM

Please join us for birdwatching with expert birders, lectures from local researchers, bird feeder building, live raptor show, and activities for children.
\$10/person for those 12 and over, \$5/person for Friends of Wood Lake Members.

www.woodlakenaturecenter.org

Minnesota loses a conservation giant

By Mike Rahn

You could say it was a fitting time for a person of his passions and accomplishments to pass on. Just a few days from the first day of spring, ducks, geese, shorebirds

and songbirds were arriving on their northward migration. The earth is softening, water is flowing, and the pulse of new life is evident, despite temporary seasonal setbacks.

I received an e-mail at work from an acquaintance, informing me that Art Hawkins, 92, one of the most accomplished of Minnesota’s conservationists, had died. Forwarded in this e-mail was a touching, eloquent letter written by one of Art’s children, to be passed on to friends, acquaintances and peers, and the many others who would care.

Most who crusade to save our natural legacy and keep the world a healthy place do not become celebrities. Yes, many do know that Teddy Roosevelt was an avid hunter, and helped to jump-start forest preservation and wildlife management. Some, though probably fewer, have heard of Aldo Leopold, the father of modern wildlife management, and champion of the “land ethic” linking fish and wildlife abundance with the health of the lands and waters that support them.

But our best known outdoor icons are the guys who win fishing tournaments, who write outdoor books and produce videos, or host television shows on hunting and angling. Some are genuine, articulate and effective conservationists. A few are a disgrace, but perversely draw viewers in spite of that. Many

are somewhere in between; entertaining and providing vicarious hunting and fishing experiences, teaching us tips and tricks, while not alienating advertisers by being too outspoken.

People like Art, a pioneer in duck and goose management, with a career that spanned 35 years, whose technical influence has continued long after his retirement, are – for the most part – unsung. They remain out of the spotlight, yet their contributions are monumental.

As a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service biologist, Art was involved in creating the annual aerial surveys of northern breeding grounds, which have been part of the process of estimating waterfowl abundance and setting hunting seasons for a half century. He helped conceive and design the wood duck box that has been so instrumental in the restoration of that species,

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