

Land and Wildlife

Arnold

I would catch carp. Well all game fish like bass and crappie and pike. Wouldn't catch them to sell 'em for commercial, but, you'd catch shad, during the season when shad was runnin' and you'd catch carp and catfish and blue gills. And fish called tobacco boxes that's the blue gill family. But the ones we really used to sell were like rock fish. You'd catch boatloads of 'em really. We used to fish right up here on the boulevard at Hunting Creek. Even after they put the boulevard in there that was still a good place to fish. The water was clear, still good.

We used to fish with a big seine net. I guess it would be a half a mile long. And you'd put it on the boat and well, I don't know if you know what a seine net is. Well, it would be say 18 or 20 feet deep, and you had a lead line that'd be the bottom and you had your net. Then you had a cork line to keep the top of it up and a lead line—so you had it packed on the boat. And you had a long rope, say three or four blocks long that somebody would stand on shore and hold it.

You'd go out so far and you'd make a horseshoe, make a turn just like that. Of course livin' here all these years you knew just about where to fish. And with it you could cover say a quarter mile in the water and somebody would hold it. If we didn't have enough help we'd tie it to the tree along the shore. Then two men would row this big boat out and make the horseshoe and then you'd start pullin' it in.

Then when you got the net in the shore it'd take two men. One man to pull the lead line and one the cork line. You just kept pullin' it in and what fish were in there would stay in there. You'd bring it into shore and that's where you'd catch your fish. That's why when I say you'd catch two or three boatloads you really would.

My father and my brothers used to fish commercially. Now when we lived over there right along the boulevard where that park area is, well we had a big fish pond there. I guess it was about two blocks long.

There was a real tiny little creek that backed up in there, that probably gave him the idea. It was easy to dredge out and they dug this pond out. It had all these natural springs in there, bein' that close to the water it had, oh, ten or eleven different springs in there. All that fresh water in there was good to put those fish in.

In the summertime we'd catch those loads of fish like carp and catfish and the market wouldn't be good for 'em. You wouldn't get a penny a pound for 'em then. It wouldn't pay ya to take 'em over to D.C., so he would put 'em in the pond. Then in the wintertime when the river froze over, he'd crack the ice in the pond and he had a small seine, he'd seine 'em out.

There used to be trucks from Baltimore and Philadelphia. They were tank trucks and they'd be full of water. Had a pump on it to pump air in it, keep the fish alive. And they'd come down here and buy 'em in the wintertime, take 'em back. And there was a good market for 'em, he'd make a good livin' like that.

1943 is when it started and 1945 is when it really got bad. I don't think the war had anything to do with it. I think it was all the building and all the sewage. You didn't have as many people living down here before. You didn't have Belle View and all those places in those days so there wasn't that raw sewage dumped in there. Down here everybody had an outhouse, so there was no sewage dumped in it at all then.

I remember in the evening us kids, we'd get a towel and a cake of soap and every evenin' we'd go down there and take a bath, really. It was clear. I know a lot of people say that was a silly thing to do, but it was really clear enough to drink. It was really beautiful.

You could look down, comin' across that trestle bridge, say 20 or 30 feet and see fish swimming and all kinds of different kinds of grass growing in there. There's not a thing in there, no grass or anything in there today to purify that water. I mean you gotta have things in there like that for the fish to live too, and there's not a darn thing in there like that.

Then back in 1933 the government imported chinese chestnuts, that's what we called 'em and it was just a real wide thing like a star, had five prongs. Real sharp and got real hard as a rock. Like a needle if you stepped on the darned thing!

They said that they brought those things over here to feed the fish. Well, the things just grew and multiplied so that before I went into the service in 1940 the water was so thick that you couldn't even row a boat from here to Maryland. Really, that's how thick it got in there. Why, it got so bad it killed the other vegetation off and there was just nothing to breathe in there. It wasn't even good for the fish 'cause they couldn't get a whole lot of oxygen.

So it got so bad, the engineers had to come along and cut all of that out. It took 'em about ten years to get it all out, but they finally did.

They'd spend each summer, a few guys out of college and high school kids, and they'd all get jobs doing it. Working on motor boats that had motors on the propellers in the back, and cut the grass up. They'd have another boat that would come along and pick it up and take it back to shore. Anything to get rid of it, but it took a long time.

Beard

I was county agricultural agent for Fairfax County, Virginia from 1937 through 1970. I was a representative of Virginia Polytechnical Institute and the County of Fairfax, and also of the United States Department of Agriculture. Our main objective was to take the information from the experiment stations of the state of Virginia to the farmers and the homeowner who use it. This included home demonstration work, food, nutrition, and clothing. It also included farm crops, livestock, horticulture, vegetables, Four-H club work, youth programs, and things of this kind, that the state agriculture and Home Economics Department was interested in distributing to the people. In addition to that we distributed various outlines and bulletins which were published by the Federal Department of Agriculture and by the state of Virginia which the people in Fairfax County used in their every day life and programs.

The land in this area here was principally farming. Fairfax County was the leading dairy county in the state of Virginia. There were 317 commercial dairy farms in Fairfax County when I came here to work in 1937. They marketed their milk through a co-operative known as the Maryland-Virginia Milk Producers Association. Fairfax County was large enough to have three directors in this area. One of them was Mr. Lud Popkins who lived right down the road here on Popkins Lane. Shortly thereafter he went out of the dairy business. His brother, Earl Popkins, became the director from this eastern area of Fairfax County. This was in 1937-38.

This part of the county also produced a lot of truck crops. They had grapes, apples, and vegetables like cabbage, turnips, tomatoes, and string beans. We had farm markets in those days, where a farmer could take his produce from the farm. He'd pick it one evening, take it in the next morning and offer it for sale right there in the farmer's market in Alexandria, and also in Washington, D.C. In those days we had automobiles, and trucks so it didn't take them very long to get to market.

Down the road there were several nurseries that grew flowers for sale. One of the largest nurseries was right down at the end of Number 1 highway, just at it entered Alexandria. They wholesaled their flowers to the flower shops in Washington and Baltimore.

A third thing which we had down here was poultry. People needed eggs and fried chicken in the restaurants, and at the military reservations. Many of those eggs and chickens were produced right in this neighborhood. You see, we didn't have electrical refrigeration and we didn't have good highways with large refrigerated trucks to keep farm produce fresh as we do today. Most of the foods that were grown for the cities or urban communities were produced nearby.

Another factor which wasn't too healthy in some respects were hog farms. The farmers had a great big fence around a piece of woods. They would go to the hotels

and the military reservations, get the garbage, and bring it out and put it on a board or concrete platform and let the hog go in and eat it. After the hogs got all the garbage they could handle they'd go down and take a nap in the woods. This was quite profitable because anyone could make a profit in producing a farm product if you got feed free. Health ordinances today do not permit this type of activity.

There were two Popkins brothers, Parker brothers, the Masons, W. F. P. Reid over here on Beacon Hill. C. K. Wilkinson down the road here just a piece. There were many that I didn't become personally acquainted with because in 1941 I was called to war and I didn't get back for 4½ years. By that time Springfield, Groveton, Kings Park and all the others were starting to have housing developments. The pigs had gone and people were coming in. Although these dairy farms lasted a little longer than this because somehow cows don't smell quite as bad as pigs.

The farms varied, but the average farm was about 100 acres. Back in those days many people had farms of 150 acres, and 50 acres of it was in woods. Also, a farmer usually cut his own fence posts out in his own wood. If you wanted some lumber you hauled your own logs to the saw mill from your own trees. The woods furnished leaves for bedding and for mulching. It furnished a place for the cow to go down in the woods and have a baby calf or the horse to find a place to hide to have a baby colt. It produced some protection on cold winter days when the animals were out getting some exercise. Many of these pig pens were down in the woods because it didn't need much shelter. 30 to 50 acres of most all the farms being in woods and bushes was a pretty good idea.

Generally speaking, a farmer could support around from 20 to 30 cows on a hundred acres. This meant about 3 acres per cow. There was quite an advantage to raise your own feed. It was also to your advantage to have your own pasture and let the cows eat all the grass they could.

The corn crop was usually followed by wheat or oats. The wheat was sold to the mill for somebody to make bread out of and some was kept over to feed the chickens. If they grew oats, horses or chickens either one could eat oats. Then the third or fourth years you had it in clover or timothy or some form of hay. Most of these people had a four year crop rotation. You generally tired to have as many or twice as many acres of hay as you had either corn and wheat. This rotation was a good thing to do because if they planted corn in the same field every year the insects or diseases would get bad. Now later on there were strains of corn developed which were resistant to the insects and the diseases. In those days they didn't spray corn at all. They found that if they rotate around, the corn insects didn't bother the hay and the hay insects, if there were any, didn't bother the corn.

Deer and wild turkeys did all right until automobiles came along. A deer will not live in an area where automobiles are. That's one of the big problems we have with the parks today. Just as soon as they build a big park they build a big road right through it and the deer will not live where you have automobiles. We had possums, and 'coons, and I expect you still have possums and coon around here. Crows didn't do much except eat corn and get in the farm crops and one thing and another and it was usually considered a nuisance, but we had 'em anyway.

We had a little bird that was right much of a nuisance because he carried disease from one farm to another and that was the English Sparrow. I've been in Washington, D.C. and Alexandria too, and seen those things just as thick as they could be because they had a lot of horses in Alexandria, and Washington and they'd drop grain all around

the streets. The birds would come out and eat. Also, the rats came. You hear conservation people saying, "Why don't you save pollution and get a horse?" Can you imagine what Washington, D.C. would look like today if it had as many horses in there as it would take? The horse manure would be four feet deep on the streets from one place to another! In those days the men had to go up and down the streets with wheelbarrows and brooms to pick up the horse manure all over the streets.

The areas that started to be developed first were those areas in woods and bushes because the farmers didn't want to sell any farm land. The reason they did was because the taxes got so high that they couldn't compete with the markets to the west and to the south of us. With the good roads and with refrigeration it doesn't make any difference to you, now, whether an egg is produced in Groveton or whether that egg is produced up in the Shenandoah Valley where most of 'em are.

Fishing of course took place out in the Potomac River until it became so polluted that no one wanted to eat the fish or the fish couldn't live. There was even oysters, clams, and all kinds of fish.

Now it's against the law for you to shoot and the reason its against the law is for safety purposes. It's almost impossible to shoot or explode anything now without it damaging the neighbors. Whenever you get so that you build as many as three houses on an acre, there's no place on that acre that you can shoot safely.

Same with steel traps. They used to trap possums, and now everytime you tried to trap something like that you'd catch somebody's dog or cat. Well, you just as well catch one of their children as try to catch their dog or cat 'cause they'd make just as much fuss over it.

Originally the means of cultivating was with a hoe. Then people got a horse or a mule.

Later on we got garden tractors after W.W. II was over and they became popular. It used to be that all the tractors were run with kerosene. They didn't start very easily and you'd have to crank and crank and sometimes you could get your hoeing done before you got the tractor started. It was an evolution from a hoe, to the single shovel plough with a mule or a horse, to the garden tractor.

Hammerschlag

I've been with the Park Service for about four years. The Park Service, as a national organization, is divided into ten regions and the basic purpose is to preserve outstanding natural resources and at the same time to make sure that the resources are perpetuated so that they will be there for the following generations to enjoy and to utilize. We're talking here about an urban area and what you find mostly is a loss or decrease in even the typical wildlife. Sure, there are some beavers that are invading the C and O Canal. There are the water fowl, which have become limited simply because most of the marshes are gone. Rock Creek Valley is becoming more utilized than it used to, because that particular stream is improving.

As you go up the Potomac, away from the estuary water, the fishing improves, because the Potomac is being cleaned up. They're catching bass, and fishing is improving

above the estuary. The people walk around the point here (Haines Pt.) and they catch an occasional carp or catfish. They will catch perch during the spring runs. You don't have the nice shorelines. You don't have the tree lined bank. You don't have any of that kind of fishing anymore. You're fishing off a railing or off a rip-rap bank or that kind of thing.

There used to be a lot in Dyke Marsh that is just not there anymore. You could bring it back maybe, but it is just not there now. Dyke Marsh is a remaining wetland area. We have lost about half of it and there's still the strong erosional influences in the deeper off-water areas where it was dredged out. We seem to be having a severe problem all along this Potomac estuary from the shoreline. I am not really sure what it is due to, perhaps partially boating and increased wave action, but there is, as there has been in the past 200 years, a very strong depression of the shoreline throughout the area.

G.W. Parkway

The following is an excerpt chosen from the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, study of the George Washington Memorial Parkway published February 14, 1977.

"The George Washington Memorial Parkway habitats are field, upland, forest, swamp and marsh. The western side of the parkway is a mixture of open areas (fields) and upland forest. The upland forest is vegetated with red cedar and black oak. Other species present in significant number are Virginia pine, red willow, and flowering dogwood. The open areas are seeded with several species of fescue, perennial rye, and Kentucky bluegrass. Interspersed in the grass are chickweed, speedwell, orchard grass and ground ivy. The eastern side of the parkway is largely occupied by a mature deciduous hardwood forest. The upland forest is primarily vegetated with several species of oak, black locusts, yellow poplar, and red cedar. Dense growth of Japanese honeysuckle dominate the undergrowth. The swamp habitat along the western shore of the Potomac is chiefly composed of red ash and silver maple. Additional prevalent species are sycamore, box elder, red willow, button bush, black gum, and staghorn sumac. Dominant herbaceous plants in the undergrowth are dodder, water hemp, and Halberd-leaved tear-thumb. Regularly and irregularly inundated fresh to mildly brackish marshes occur to the north and east of the project area. These wetlands are dominated by narrow-leaved cattail, water hemp, Halberd-leaved tearthumb and sweetflag. Other aquatic and emergent vegetation present in significant quantities are pickerelweed, wild rice, yellow water lily, arrow arum and swamp rose." (p. 8-9)

"Mammals representative of the upland fields and forests adjacent to the parkway are white tailed deer, raccoon, opossum, gray squirrel, eastern cottontail, gray fox and skunk. Birds common to these upland habitats are crow, several species of sparrow, bobwhite, morning dove, mockingbird, robin, starling, common grackle, blue jay and cardinal. Mammals that utilize the wetlands are muskrat, raccoon, white tailed deer, and beaver. Birds and waterfowl present in the wetlands are redwing blackbird, long billed marsh wren, American egret, and great blue heron. Several species of geese and

Risley

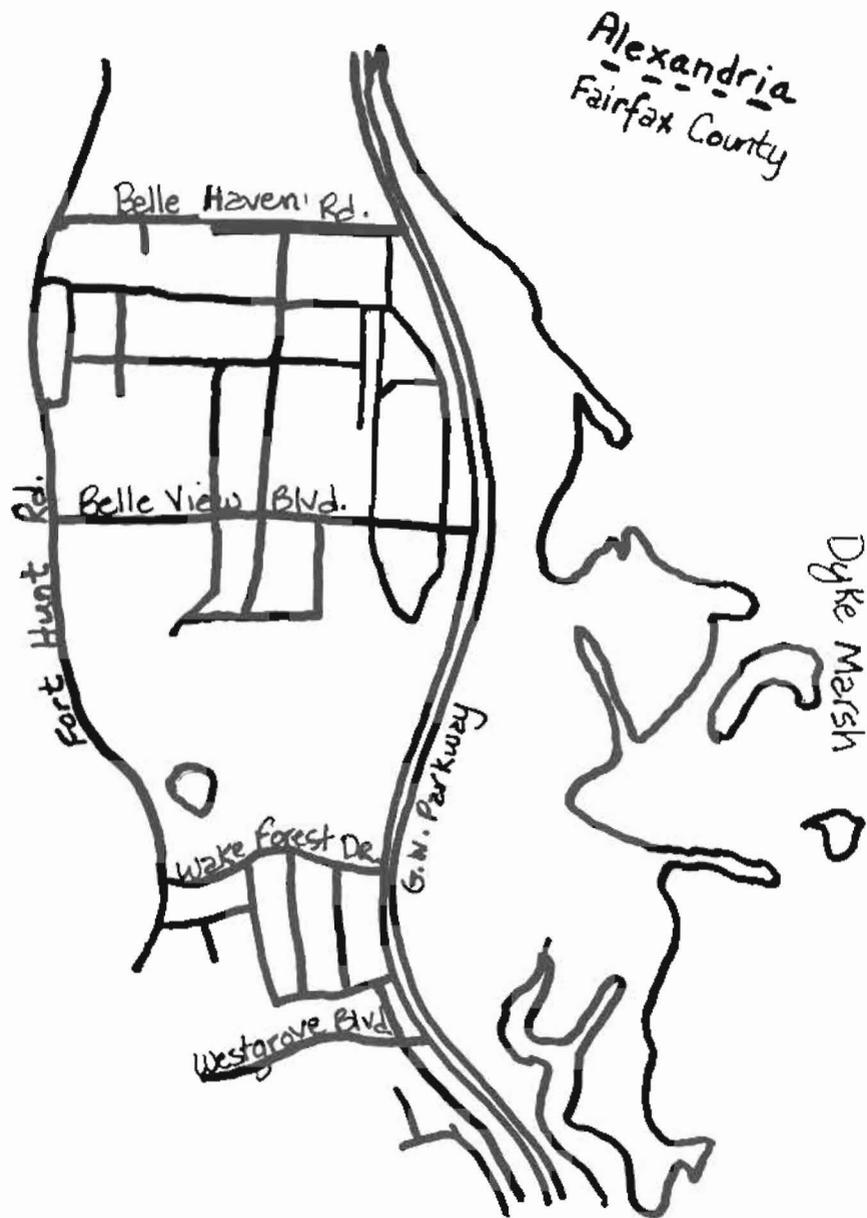
When I went down to Dyke Marsh it was all a new area to me and I could see that there were little passageways through the marsh and so on. I learned only recently that all those places have names. People went in there to trap turtles and fish. You still see fishermen going in there who know the marsh quite well. I understand during prohibition there was often a still in there. People went fishing there on the docks to the West Grove Plantation, the area which is now Belle Haven Country Club "Plantation." When you go to history you find references to Hunting Creek that date back to about 1690. Someone had a fort where Hunting Towers is now. I'm sort of interested in the modern period.

Dyke Marsh has had a lot of valuable sand, valuable to construction people so that property rights were bought up by a company called Smoot Sand and Gravel. Up until about five years ago there was dredging out there, pumping sand which they sell to a concrete company. There were some people in the area who saw that this was a valuable resource being dredged away and put pressure on Congress and a bill was passed about twenty years ago that got this property from Smoot, Sand and Gravel not for money, but for some land exchange. At any rate Dyke Marsh is now the property of the Department of the Interior. It was designated as a sanctuary and it is a water fowl refuge and so we shouldn't expect to see it developed. I just say expect because you can't really rely on anything.

There was an article in 1952 "Atlantic Naturalist" about "Shall Dyke Marsh be saved." This is 25 years ago and people were concerned about preserving this valuable piece of property. After Congress passed its law someone called up the Department of the Interior to find out what they were doing to preserve the wildlife there, and the reply was "I am not aware that anything is being done."

The reason it is sort of interesting is that the birds are coming and going all the time. One man's been keeping track and he's seen about 140 different species just around Dyke Marsh. You don't have very many places to see that many different kinds of birds. Last week there was an Iceland tern, no an Icelandic gull, which came from the Arctic. You can see world travelers down there: You can experience the river.

I go down there to watch birds. Most people call themselves "birders." You go to the birds' habitat. You go down south of Hunting Towers and there's the Belle Haven Picnic area. Park the car there, then walk south, going towards the Marina and there's an entrance way with a wire fence and a wooden fence to keep motorcycles out. If you want to, join the crowd about 8 o'clock in the morning on Saturdays. Anyone's welcome. It's kind of an introduction to the marsh to go with a group of people. They point out various kinds of birds as you walk along.



Map showing location of Dyke Marsh

Years ago when the assault was first started on Dyke Marsh, much of that area was owned by the Smoot Sand and Gravel Co. That caused the start of the Potomac Valley Recreation and Conservation Consult and that was the focal point. Later on after I got here I was named to represent the people from Alexandria and Southerly on that Consult.

I'm a retired forester. When I was in the National Forest I had a great deal of experience in this field. Problems got to be so intense that we (the consult) were meeting one night a week, then two nights a week, and so on. I had been through three coronaries before I came here. I used to break down doors when they wouldn't open, and sleep when I could so I finally paid for it, but it's hard to keep your nose out of things. The doctor told me, "No more." Well, I left the job in the Potomac Valley Recreation consult.

The next assault on Dyke Marsh was in the early 1950's, when this Belle View apartment group were gonna put up twenty story apartments. When you put up that kind of stuff you had to put down piling. Since you had to put piling down, the more stories you could get on it, the cheaper! Then they were going to pump the field. That's when the fight was renewed. They wound up with these three white apartments you see down there now. That was just the first step. The next step was to go right out and make it look like Rio de Janiero, all the way.

Then the local radio station, WPIK, wanted to put a tower where they put this highway, Interstate 495. Of course that would have gone up hundreds of feet. So we mustered everyone we could to fight that, including the Airlines Pilot Association. It was a hazard to them, sticking up right down there. We finally got rid of that, but in the mean time I was prodding to get that land into public ownership. We didn't have the authority. If you don't have the authority you get it. So we got two or three congressmen interested. One of them was a woman from Ohio. Sometimes you get a knowledgeable woman like that in her position, they get a lock on something, and they're gonna get it done. That's the kinda people I like to deal with. She went down there, looked at it, walked through all that and finally got the authority to make a trade with Smoot. That's the way that area was eventually saved.

It (Dyke Marsh) starts to the south of the bridge in Hunting Towers, on the riverside of the Parkway. When I came here there were houses there. They got rid of those, got that into public ownership. Those houses were not high quality, but people lived there and probably would have liked to stay, but there are times when you have to give way to the public's interest.

To the north of the Hollin Hall Shopping Center directly across the parkway on the river side is private land. As far as I know, that's still private. They were gonna build high rise apartments there a few years ago. There is some public land in front of it to the north. That's about the south end of Dyke Marsh.

When I built up on the hill there was nothing between me and the river except the parkway. It was all forest. I had all the snakes and birds and mammals in my yard. I had a mailbox out in the street and I gave that up every summer 'cause the bluebirds used it. Who see's any blue birds anymore? The mailman and I decided that we were outranked, so we made other arrangements through the summer. I have over sixty species

of birds in my yard. I feed and water them. I have three bird baths which I keep fresh all the time. I fan 'em and change their diapers. I have 'em through the winter and summer.

The remnants of them now are down at Dyke Marsh. That area in there is perfect for that but to anyone else that area is worthless. These are critical areas in the life cycle and the food chain of water life. The corps of engineers wants to give up some field down there and some of the old stuff Smoot Sand and Gravel dug out. We have to be very careful that we fill only up to a certain depth from the surface down in order to retain our water bird life in there. They're willing to do that. They're very progressive in spite of what you read about the Corps Engineers—very progressive outfit.

Dyke Marsh is the center of everything around here. Last year we had the big-horned owl. Everybody had to go down. I have that same owl in my yard. Went home one evening and my wife said, "My gosh, here's our friend." She was sitting on the power line into the house. Dyke Marsh you'll find that is a fascinating laboratory. To look at it from the uneducated eye it looks like a lot of waste land that'd be better if we could put some dispossessed people there and some high rise apartments for the rich. Everything is worthless until people start looking at it with the right eye and using it the way it should be used. Then it is invaluable.

Once in a while I walk down in the swampy area. Sometimes I get up to my knees. I like to see what's happening. I always see my pets, my deer tracks down there. Now that dogs are supposed to be penned up, why they're probably doing quite well down there where there's plenty of food for them.

We had some of the migrating geese nest down there now, every summer they stay here. They don't go any farther north. They like that down there. It's close to the White House. They have nice views! After the corn and small grain harvest it's loaded with food that the water birds just love. That's the reason there's hunters to the south of us, in the Carolina's specially, and further south that haven't liked this because the migrating ducks and geese have been staying here. The water's open, food's good in the fields, so they haven't gone down there to be shot like they used to. Well, Dyke Marsh is a pretty popular place for quite a few of those birds.

In a community the most of the people never know. They never know until it's too late. How do you get word to them? You contact the media to try to get them to advise people. All people don't read either. They don't pick up a paper except to read the funnies. Public meetings—but who goes to public meetings? Then you try to go to doors with handouts. You'll find a gathering of some, who are saying, "I'm not gonna put up with this," and then you start putting the pressure on. Get your facts. You can go down there and get in front of the bulldozers and all that all you want to and the media'll come take your picture, but that's not the best approach. Get your hard facts and then stand on them and force them to put theirs on the table.

What is Dyke Marsh? Who knows? Find out. Go to the public records and see their maps and charts. Find out what has been done. Who do I want to join up with? If there isn't anyone to join up with, do I want to go out in front and start laying the stuff on the line and get people to join up with me?

I'm really tired. I'm in my 70's and I am so busy I haven't had time to go back on that old history. I got the looking glass out.

Abbott

I've been living here in New Alexandria since 1950. I've lived here in Waynewood since 1958.

I got interested in bird-watching when I was a little kid. My dad used to take me out for walks and sled rides and things like that. He was interested in animals and on our walks I used to see birds. One time a pheasant flushed up from under our feet practically and flew into a house and broke its neck. I went over and picked it up and saw all those beautiful feathers on it. It sort of hooked me right then. I was about six I guess.

I belong to the Audubon Naturalists Society here in Washington, the Virginia Society of Ornithology, The Maryland Society of Ornithology, The American Ornithologists Union, and two or three others affiliated with birding. The American Birding Association is the latest one, strictly for hot shot birders who want to travel around and keep a long life list.

I think perhaps one thing you might be interested in, is that I conduct a Bald Eagle nest survey on the Chesapeake Bay Region, which means that I go out in airplanes and look for Eagle nests. I find them and find out how many young they hatch out every year.

Around nesting season in this region, the abundance of Bald Eagles is about 80 pairs. This is down from about 250 pairs when they did the survey by the Audubon Society, back in 1936. We finally discovered that it was pesticides. Pollution of the water gets in the fish, eagles eat the fish, and it kills them off. It disturbs their calcium producing process. Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*, I think more than anything else, got the states interested in curtailing the use of these very long life carbonated pesticides, which are extremely toxic. They kill the bugs but they also kill everything else they come in contact with. So now the Eagle population is doing a little better. The first year of an Eagle's life is the worst year as far as survivability. All the records we have of birds that are found dead, are in the first year. If they can survive that first year, they'll be all right.

In this area we have a resident population of about 50 species of birds that you can find all year round. In the summer we get an additional 60 to 65 species that nest here that aren't here any other time. Then there are migration periods, which are the spring and fall. We get an additional 100 or so that go through.

The birds I like best, are eagles and hawks of the Raptor family. I'd say we have 4 species of resident hawks, which include the turkey vulture, the red tail, red shoulder, and the little sparrow hawk or kestrel. We also have several migrant hawks.

An experience that was mighty frightening at the time, was during an Eagle survey. I was in an Army helicopter and we were going around an Eagle's nest. It was about 80 feet up in a pine tree in a little open area where there were not too many big trees

right close, and I'm taking movies of it. All of a sudden the pilot taps me on the shoulder and says, "We're going down." And we sure were. We were going right down full power. We went right into the tree and the blades wrapped all around the tree and we turned upside down. Came to rest three feet off the ground upside down; gasoline pouring out all over the place. Luckily I had my map. We got out of the plane afraid it would catch fire but it didn't. We checked the map and found a way out on a dirt road and got out to a place where we could telephone. The Army took a very dim view of that. They said, "The next time we fly you on your Eagle mission, the pilot will stay at 200 feet altitude and keep up about 90 knots and none of this fooling around taking pictures."

One time we got chased by Eagles. An Eagle had a young bird in a nest when our helicopter came over it and that old bird took off and dive-bombed us about four times. The pilot was scared to death. The Eagles in this area are not as wild as the ones up in Alaska, where there are plenty of Eagles. Up there they attack anything that moves near the nest and several planes have crashed because of Eagles going through the windshield. But most of our Eagles here just sit and watch us go by. Even if you climb the tree to band the young, the old Eagles take off and fly around in the air at a distance. But they won't come and chase you.

I'd say I've watched birds in all the states except in the Northwest. I've never been out in the Northwest. I've lived in California, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

I've seen quite a number of what I call rare birds. A rare bird nowadays, would be one that there may not be more than 100 left, like the California Condor, which lives only in the San Gabriel Mountains of Los Angeles County of California. This is the biggest bird in the United States and its got a wing spread of about 11 feet. Its a type of vulture really. I saw three of those when I lived out there. We went up into the canyon and found three of them circling around in the air. They made a sanctuary out of the mountain range now just for the Condor.

My favorite spots around here are Hunting Creek and Dyke Marsh, just below Hunting Creek; here you can get the marsh birds as well as the water birds. There's a wood edge there that's very good for migrating birds. The river itself is a great place to stop off every time you get a chance because there are ducks swimming up and down and gulls. The Mount Vernon Woods and Fort Hunt, are great spots. Fort Belvoir is also a good spot. But those are the places I go most often.

We participate in all the big bird counts. At Christmas time, the big thing among birdwatchers is the Christmas Bird Count. This is where you go out before dawn and stay out till dark and you count every bird you can find in an area that you're assigned. Over the years the amount of information you get from that is quite interesting. Developments change things, the birds change. Some species get more common and others get rare.

I bird a little bit everyday if I can. Just going to Fort Belvoir from here, I stop along the river and look sometimes. At lunch if it's a nice day, I usually take a walk out in the woods.

Stevens

We used to keep a lot of animals. Daddy used to go trapping. Used to trap quail and things like that. . . keep them in cages so the foxes wouldn't get them. There were foxes all over the place. There was a little kind of pigeon coop near the chicken houses, just full of pigeons. I think I had some pet pigeons. We did catch a fox one time, which we kept for maybe a day or so in a cage which was a horrible thing to watch. We kept an opossum in captivity for a while, but it died. No lions or tigers or bears as I recall. Hundreds of raccoons! There were plenty of raccoon skins tacked to the chicken house.

Also in those early days, there was a chicken farm with thousands of chickens and a good many turkeys. You couldn't get me near the turkey pen. Turkeys are big and ugly and you walk into five hundred of 'em, you wonder if you're going to make it out alive. All the mice were in the chicken houses. There were two long rooms in the chicken houses and between them there was a storage room. You'd pick up a bunch of feed bags and uncover a nest of mice.

I was chased by a snake once. I looked at him, he looked at me and started taking after me. I was running fast, I looked back and there it comes, "psst, psst," down the path. Home to mama! Stay outta that patch! There were black snakes and king snakes. When I was very young, there were lots of scares of copperheads.

Gallagher

We still have wild animals here. We have opossum and things like that. It's a funny thing. I used to hear people talk about deer. In all the years that I've lived in this area I never saw a live deer. There's more deer up at Ft. Belvoir now than there ever was when I lived there fifty years ago. I saw one go across the road one night down near Davidson Airfield. I almost hit him. On my way down to the Lazy Susan. Five cars just barely missed him. Came right out of the woods. With those hooves they've got, they couldn't grab hold of the concrete. They were slippin' and a-slidin', darn near scared the heck out of us. We could have gotten killed if we hit one of them. I never saw any of the foxes, any of these animals that people claimed they saw, but I never saw any of these things. I think animals are coming in now.

Desmond

The warden said it came from Fort Belvoir. They apparently was doing a survey down there and were spooking a lot of the deer up. This one just got mixed up, came through the development from the other side of the highway. When it crossed the highway it ran into a car waiting to make a left hand turn. As it ran up between two apartment buildings. The kids were chasing it. They cornered it up in the corner of the building where I am at, right there at my dining room window. The warden said that apparently it must have seen its reflection in the glass and thought it was another deer looking for a way out. It jumped through my window, broke the glass, and landed on the dining

room table, its legs spread out from under it. I had a bunch of house plants set up in the window sill. It knocked all those over. Since it hit that car it was bleeding so it put blood on everything.

This friend of mine came down and told me that a deer had jumped through my window. I thought he was kinda bullshitting me, but when I went up to the window and saw it all smashed out and the house all messed up, I figured he was telling the truth. I told him to go get his gun. I was going to shoot it, but what he brought me was not quite what I needed to kill it, so I just waited for the warden to come in.

It (the deer) was down the corner of my bed against the wall, kinda hidden. When I opened the door to see it, it jumped over my bed to the other side of the room. It just started running into the corner, trying to get out of the corner. Since I didn't have a gun to kill it, I just shut the door and waited for the warden to come. They were going to shoot it with a hypodermic blow gun. I asked them if they would let me have the meat after they shot it. They told me that the drug's got nicotine. Nicotine poisons the meat.

The warden came in the bedroom to shoot the deer. The deer saw him and started running around. There was a policeman there too, standing at the door. The deer starts jumping around and he pulls the door shut and locks the warden in with this deer. The warden's yelling to open the door. The cop is holding it shut. So I opened the door up for him. When the warden came out, the deer came out too. That blew their chance for the hypodermic gun. The cop shot him as he was trying to jump back out the window.

The cop shot it three times and didn't kill it. I brought out a 22 that I had and gave it to the warden. The warden shot it in the head. They let me have the meat. I dressed it out, since it was all cut up from jumping through the glass. So, I just kept the meat and that was it. I wrapped it up and put it in the freezer that night.

1/87

(5)

✓ 975.529 S V.2

Snake Hill to Spring Bank

C. 2

Credits

PAUL H. SMITH PUBLIC LIBRARY
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22030

STUDENTS:

Theresa Allan
Tom Baldwin
Kim Barnes
Alison Carper
Pat Carter
Steve Collins
Mike Dawson
Denise Duty
Clara Ferguson
Lisa Fingeret
Judy Fisher
H. L. Frazier
Brad Furman
Kevin Harlow
Tim Harlow
Donna Hecox
David Hellmuth
John Hensley
Connie Jeffrey
Glenn Kaplan
Victor Kelly
Tammy King
Mary McCarthy
Chris McNeal
Sharon Meagher
Cheryl Meeks
Cheryl Memmo
Charles Muck
Beth Murphy
Ellen O'Donnell
Michel O'Quinn
Lisa Powers
Janice Price
Gary Proffit
Bryan Rutledge
Faith Rodman
Blane St. George
Felicia Speight
Bruce Smith
Renee Stuart
Lillie Suthard
Tony Taylor
Richard Terrell
Anne Thoma

LaVerne Washington
Rachel Williams
Vincent Williams

AIDES:

Nancy Austin
Bev Byrne
Lola Hickey
Hana Hirschfeld
Sonja Lange
Margaret Moose
Pam Richmond
Barbara Shear
Martha Williams

RECENT PHOTOGRAPHS:

Charles Muck

COVER DESIGN:

Kim Benson

TEACHER:

Marian Mohr

TYPISTS:

Debbie Fields
Joanne Fraver
Cathy Incoe
Connie Jeffrey
Georgeanne Knowles
Cheryl Paddock
Susie Pearson
Sherrie Shults

5333 4186 43
03•26•01 MRB

975.529

S

V.2

APR 09 2001

~~██████████~~
Fairfax City Regional Library
3915 Chain Bridge Road
Fairfax, VA 22030

DEMCO